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The Mysterious Etruscans

Course Guidebook

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An esteemed teacher, Dr. Tuck received the 2013 E. Phillips Knox Teaching Award, Miami University's highest honor for innovative and effective undergraduate teaching. In addition, the Greater Cincinnati Consortium of Colleges and Universities gave him its Excellence in Teaching Award in 2013. Nationally, the Archaeological Institute of America, North America's oldest and largest organization devoted to archaeology, presented him with its Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award in 2014. He also has been named an Outstanding Professor, a Distinguished Scholar, and an Altman Faculty Scholar at Miami University.

Dr. Tuck has conducted archaeological fieldwork and research in Italy, Greece, England, and Egypt. He has directed more than 15 study tours in England, Greece, and Italy, the latter tours concentrated on the city of Rome and the area around the Bay of Naples, including Pompeii, Herculaneum, and the Island of Capri. He has given more than 60 public lectures, including as a national lecturer for the Archaeological Institute of America. Dr. Tuck served as president of the Vergilian Society, an international academic organization dedicated to studying and promoting the works of the Roman poet Vergil.

He consults on ancient sculpture and gallery design at the Ancient Sculpture Museum, Pyramid Hill Sculpture & Museum Park, in Hamilton, Ohio.

Dr. Tuck has published extensively on the art and archaeology of the ancient world. He is the author of numerous articles featured in international journals on such varied topics as Greek sling bullet inscriptions, the lives of sailors in the Roman navy, the schedule of gladiatorial games at Pompeii, the decorative program of the amphitheater at Capua, the professional organizations of spectacle performers, Roman sculpture, and triumphal imagery across the ancient Roman world. He is the author of *A History of Roman Art*, a lavishly illustrated introduction to the topic.

Dr. Tuck has taught three previous Great Courses: *Experiencing Rome: A Visual Exploration of Antiquity's Greatest Empire*; *Pompeii: Daily Life in an Ancient Roman City*; and *Cities of the Ancient World*. ■

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The Mysterious Etruscans

Scope:

Although history tends to glorify the Greeks and Romans, the Western world owes much of its origins to the Etruscans. The Etruscans transmitted Greek art and culture to the West and once ruled Rome itself, along with nearly the whole of Italy. From this crossroads of the Mediterranean, they fought wars and made alliances with the Romans, Greeks, and Carthaginians, who sought trade and treaties with the wealthy and powerful Etruscans. Virtually everything we today consider Roman was actually inherited from the Etruscans, including the toga and temple, as well as major elements of art, writing, religion, and government. And the Etruscans have left behind some of the most spectacular art that survives from antiquity, including rich gold jewelry, sophisticated bronze sculpture, and stunning painted tombs.

In this course, we'll explore all the major facets of Etruscan life, beginning with their cities. The location and layout of these cities demonstrates their vision, as Rome, Capua, Orvieto, Pisa, Bologna, Siena, and even Pompeii began as Etruscan city foundations. We'll examine the surprising evidence that the Etruscans' cities reflected their understanding of the organization of the cosmos. Perhaps even more remarkably, their cemeteries are laid out as cities for eternity and the individual tombs as family homes, permanent stone structures preserving their social organization and the significance of the family in their world. From that base, we move to questions of belief, with investigations of the Etruscans' notion of the afterlife, their conception of deities, and their creation of sanctuaries—laid out like cities as a sort of cosmic echo. Religion and myth permeated the Etruscan world, similar to what is found in ancient Greece, but to an even greater extent. An understanding of the myths and legends of both Etruscan and Greek gods and heroes allows us to see their perspective on nature, politics, the relations between people and the gods, and even gender roles in the community.

Along the way, we will learn how Etruscans ran their public world, including government and the military, trade and professions, and sports and spectacle. The Etruscan world was made up of dozens of small, independent city-states, each of which constituted a sovereign state with a range of forms of government; small-scale wars were waged between them regularly. We trace the Etruscans' gradual losses of battles and land to the Greeks and Romans as they were driven back and absorbed by these other cultures, which were, in turn, altered by what they absorbed from the Etruscans. We'll discover the evidence for the origins of gladiatorial combat in Etruscan spectacle, for example. Along with that public world, we examine Etruscan private life, including definitions of family, the status and roles of women, and the domestic world. The public and private worlds merge in the quintessential Etruscan activity: banqueting. We'll learn how the banquet served as the means to convey social and political status; piety toward the family, both living and deceased; and the culmination of religious activities. The ubiquity of the banquet led D. H. Lawrence to conclude, "That is the true Etruscan quality: ease, naturalness, and an abundance of life."

In the last section of the course, we will chart the inevitable end of the Etruscan world in the face of Roman expansion. And we'll document its cultural survival as elements of its culture were transmitted across the Western world, including the startling notion that the Etruscans may still be with us. Altogether, this course offers a rarely taken historical journey to meet these people who gave their name to Tuscany and their culture to history. ■

Lecture
1

Between the Greeks and Romans

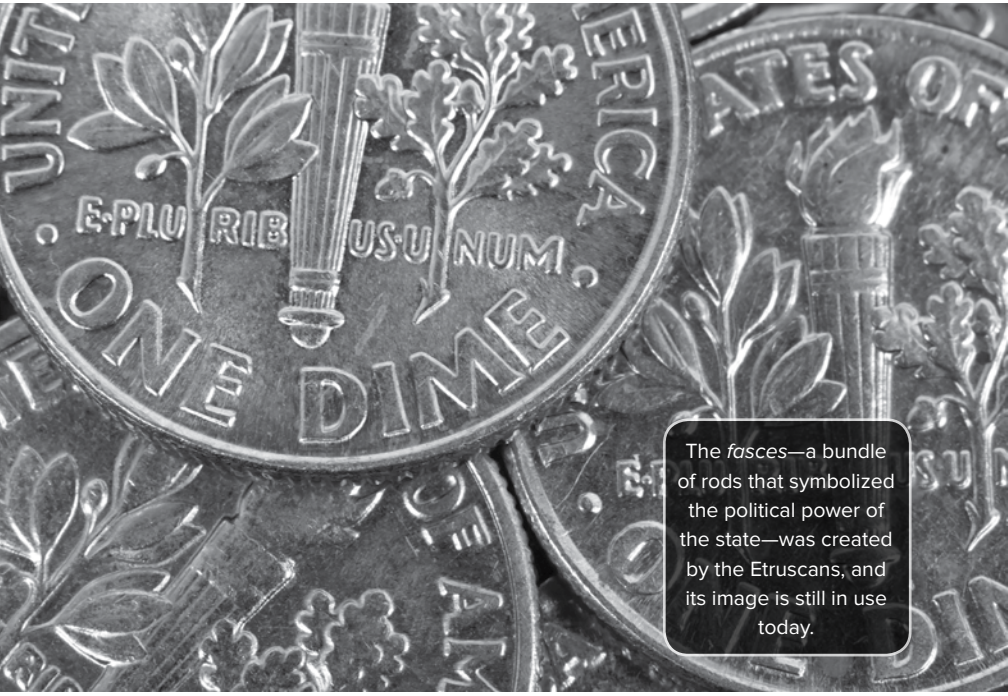
To begin our study of the Etruscans, let's consider what we know about the Romans. What are some of the iconic elements of Roman culture? Answers might range from Roman cities to religious rituals, to art and architecture, to literature and even the toga. All these key elements of culture were transmitted to the Romans through the Etruscans. And if we consider Rome one of the foundations of Western civilization—even world civilization—then we need to acknowledge that many civilizing elements actually came from the Etruscans, who invented or transmitted them to Rome and, eventually, to the world beyond. In this course, we'll explore the fascinating and mysterious Etruscan civilization.

The Origins of the Etruscans

- The Etruscans called themselves Rasenna or Rasna. In antiquity, they controlled much of northern and northwestern Italy, especially the provinces today known as Tuscany and Umbria. According to some sources, their homeland stopped at the Tiber River, south of which was the territory of the Latin people.

- Although no ancient authors dispute that the Etruscans were in Italy before the Romans were, there was a fierce debate, even in antiquity, about the origins of the Etruscan people. The reason for this is that the Etruscans were strikingly different from other peoples of ancient Italy. The two major sources—and opposing positions—that squared off in ancient times were the Greek historians Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Herodotus.

- Herodotus argued in about 430 B.C. that the Etruscans were immigrants into Italy, just like the Greeks and Romans were. In his story, they came from Lydia, in western Asia Minor (modern Turkey). A prolonged famine forced half of the people to move from the region, and they ultimately



The *fasces*—a bundle of rods that symbolized the political power of the state—was created by the Etruscans, and its image is still in use today.

reached Umbria. There, they called themselves Tyrrhenians, after the leader of their colony.

- About 400 years after Herodotus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus argued that the Etruscans were *autochthonous*, a term that refers to people or cultures who "sprang up" in a particular place.
  - Dionysius noted that the Tyrrhenians did not speak the same language as the Lydians, worship the same gods, or have similar laws or institutions. Thus, he concluded that this civilization "migrated from nowhere else, but was native to the country."

  - Dionysius made some good points. In fact, Etruscan culture, especially religion, had many singular features, and the Etruscan

language was virtually unique in the world. However, not all Etruscan culture was unique, nor did Dionysius's arguments end the debate.

- Some modern scholars support Herodotus's emigration argument with further evidence. For example, they compare the Etruscans' characteristic pointed shoes, as depicted in art from the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., to similar shoes seen in art from the same period in Asia Minor. Despite such similarities, however, footwear seems a fairly weak basis for claiming that one culture is related to another.

- Finally, after 2,500 years, we may have an answer to the question of Etruscan origins: Mitochondrial DNA analysis, based on samples taken from remains excavated in Italy and Asia Minor, concludes that the Etruscans are not related to the people of central Asia Minor. Their DNA shows no particular affinity with the ancient Lydians. The close correspondence between Etruscan and central and southern European Neolithic mitochondrial DNA is a good argument for genetic continuity.

Development of Etruscan Civilization

- Putting together archaeological and DNA studies, we have a picture of development in the Etruscan civilization. After the Bronze Age cultural collapse that affected the entire Mediterranean basin in about 1300 B.C., the so-called Villanovan culture arose. This was an early Iron Age culture, named by modern archaeologists from the type-site at Villanova—a small site about 5 miles from Bologna in northern Italy. It is essentially the early Iron Age phase of Etruscan civilization.

- We date Etruscan civilization itself as starting in 800 B.C., the time of the emergence of characteristic burial practices and pottery (among other elements) found in later centuries across Etruscan sites.

- Interestingly, this date is very close to that of the founding of Carthage (c. 810 B.C.), the founding of Rome (traditionally 753 B.C.), the establishment of the Olympic Games (776 B.C.), and the emergence of Greek colonies in Italy, beginning on the island of Ischia (c. 800 B.C.). This is a remarkable period of cultural establishment, colonial expansion, and city foundation.

- We might account for this flourishing in a number of ways, perhaps chief among them, competition and cultural connections. Certainly, the founding of Greek colonies relied on trading interests with the native inhabitants of Italy, including the Etruscans. The founding of Rome itself, immediately across the border from Etruscan territory, seems a parallel situation. Thus, it seems likely that the contact among all these civilizations is what caused the jumpstart in their cultures.

- Much of Etruscan culture was based at such cities as Bologna, Siena, Florence, and Orvieto, all of which are still occupied. In many ways, their political organization was similar to that of the contemporary Greeks. Unlike the Romans, who gradually developed a centrally controlled empire, the Etruscan formed city-states. As in the Greek world, each city and its surrounding territory made up a sovereign state. These city-states were loosely banded together into leagues, which existed primarily for mutual defense, again, as seen in the ancient Greek world.

- The Etruscan federations of states spread as they founded new colonies. Initially, what we call the Etruscan Federation was made up of 12 city-states in Etruria. A Campanian League or Federation was founded from Etruscan colonies in the south and a third league from cities in the Po River valley in the north.

- The Etruscans also had a thriving maritime culture and many harbors on the west coast of Italy. From their colonies in what is today southern Italy and Sicily, the Greeks crossed the Tyrrhenian Sea, often for trade and war. So did the Phoenicians from their cities in North Africa, Spain, and the islands of the central Mediterranean.

- But if the Etruscans lived in northern Italy, the Greeks in southern Italy and Sicily, and the Phoenicians even farther away, how did they make such strong connections to other cultures? The answer is invasion and colonization.
  - The Etruscans, like other expansionist cultures of the ancient Mediterranean, spread out across their traditional borders and colonized foreign territory. And like those other cultures, they were attracted to the land of southern Italy and competed against the

Greeks, Phoenicians, and other Italic people to control and occupy that territory.

- Once the Greeks and Phoenicians began their occupations, the Etruscans responded almost immediately. For instance, the Greeks founded their first colony in about 775 B.C. on the Italian mainland at Cumae, on the north side of the Bay of Naples. Within 10 years, the Etruscans retaliated against the Greeks by founding their own colony at Capua, not even 20 miles away. This pattern of colonial foundation and response continued for at least a couple hundred years.

- The Etruscans and Greeks competed for dominance in Campania, Capua, and Cumae for more than 500 years. They fought major battles in the 6th through 3rd centuries that drew in all the civilizations of the central Mediterranean basin. It's an extraordinary record of belligerence, but it shaped antiquity and, by extension, our own world, in a number of ways.

- For the Etruscans, the struggle to expand and gain control over ancient Italy led to competition, conflict, and direct contact with foreign cultures that spurred Etruscan growth and change. This process was not only how the Etruscans transmitted their culture to the Romans, but it was also the initial conduit for Greek culture flowing into Rome.
  - As the Etruscans came into direct contact with Greeks, their art and religion absorbed Greek concepts.

  - Looking in the other direction, there's evidence that Etruscans created the iconic monument at the site of Cumae, the grotto of the Sibyl, the influential oracle of the Greek god Apollo.

- The Roman world of the late 3rd century B.C. provides a parallel for the mechanism of cultural change that occurred with the Etruscans.
  - After the Roman general Marcus Claudius Marcellus sacked the Greek city of Syracuse in 212 B.C., he celebrated an unprecedented triumphal procession. Marcellus didn't just loot precious metals, slaves, and goods that could be used or sold. He also had his

men bring back Greek art: paintings, statues, even temples they disassembled, shipped, and reassembled in Rome.

- The result was the wide introduction of Greek art to the public of Rome for the first time. It changed the shape of the city and culture forever. War was a catalyst for cultural change. That model seems to have operated in the Etruscan world, as well.

- Rome itself was built on the south bank of the Tiber, just across from Etruscan territory. Rather predictably, the Etruscans opposed this new city at the edge of their sphere of influence and did their best to thwart Rome's growth.
  - According to their own founding myths, the Romans' wars with the Etruscans began early, with skirmishes commencing immediately following the establishment of Rome in 753 B.C.

  - Major wars took place at least from 509 B.C. to 290 B.C. Even after the occupation of Etruria in the 3rd century, the Etruscans seem to have repeatedly joined with Rome's enemies in attempts to overthrow Rome, with some uprisings taking place as late as the 1st century B.C., resulting in the final pacification of central Italy by the Romans.

The Fate of the Etruscans

- In light of all this cultural contact, what happened to the Etruscans? Certainly, they didn't just go away with the Roman conquest of their territory, and the Romans didn't depopulate the cities. The people in these cities who survived conducted their daily lives much as they had before Roman rule. Indeed, the Romans likely became more Etruscan-like as they saw the houses, art, sanctuaries, and cities of these newly captured people.

- The Etruscan people and culture survived at least the initial Roman conquest and were identifiable in Italy down to the 1st century B.C. In fact, evidence we'll discuss later suggests that, in some ways, the Etruscans are still very much with us, at least genetically—and they certainly are culturally.

- This culture—which dominated central Italy for 500 years; conducted trade, war, and diplomacy with the Greeks and Phoenicians; and stood up to the power of Rome—gives us clues to the origins of many of our own cultural traditions. Indeed, through the study of the Etruscan world, we can trace many of the foundations of Western civilization.

Suggested Reading

Barker and Rasmussen, *The Etruscans*.

Haynes, *Etruscan Civilization.*

Questions to Consider

1. Why do you imagine so many ancient authors were interested in the question of Etruscan origins? Was this interest merely curiosity or evidence of their awareness of the importance of Etruscan culture in the world?
2. It took the Romans more than 400 years to finally subdue the Etruscans. What does that fact tell us about Etruscan strength and the opportunities for cultural transference to the Romans?

Lecture 2

Lost Cities of Tuscany

No Etruscan cities that weren't overbuilt by later cultures have survived for us to study. As a sort of testimony to the Etruscans' judgment in picking locations, virtually all of the most historical cities of Italy—Siena, Pompeii, Capua, Orvieto, Pisa, and Bologna—are Etruscan foundations and are still occupied. However, many of these modern cities preserve their ancient layouts. Further, in their burial practices, the Etruscans developed the *necropolis* ("city of the dead"), which included many of the features of cities of the living. Thanks to these two mitigating factors, we can learn some important lessons about the arrangement of buildings and spaces in Etruscan cities.

Hilltop City Sites

- Where a culture chooses to found its cities is often characteristic of the culture and its needs and priorities. For example, many foundation decisions are driven by a need for—among other things—good communication, trade, or access to the waterways that make those possible.
  - The fact that the Etruscans used fortified hills almost exclusively for their cities leads us to conclude that defense was their overwhelming priority.
  - And that makes sense, given that their cities were each independent states, controlling usually only a small area of land.
- The Etruscans' careful selection of land is also notable. Italy is fairly well-stocked with rolling hills, but survey archaeology leads us to conclude that the Etruscans chose sites based on the resources of the surrounding land. All the Etruscan cities that we know of had—within a compact area—grazing and agricultural land, wooded areas for timber, and a number of other natural resources, such as clay beds, mines, and quarries.

- A side effect of this form of urban development is that, unlike Athens or later Roman colonies, such as Cosa, the hilltops of Etruscan cities weren't necessarily given over to sanctuaries. Etruscan temples were often built on terraces on the edges of the hills. The underlying concept seems to have been a desire to project the religious and cultural identity of the community to any who approached it from afar. Excellent examples of these outward-facing temples survive today in Pompeii and Orvieto.

Founding of Etruscan Cities

- The physical process of founding an Etruscan city began—as might be expected of a people thought of as the most religious in the history of the world—with a religious ritual. Priests would examine the flights of certain birds to determine whether the gods looked favorably on the new city.

- If so, the next step was to define the city's sacred boundary, referred to as the *pomerium*. This required another ritual, during which a group of priests would yoke a pair of oxen and plow a furrow along the line that would be the city walls, lifting the plow to mark roads and city gates. Images of this important ceremony survive in reliefs and bronze figural groups.

- In terms of ritual support they invoked in founding their cities, the Etruscans seem to have practiced human sacrifice. Although that practice was not unknown to the Greeks, Romans, and Phoenicians, they resorted to it only in extreme circumstances. The Etruscans indulged in it more often.

Murlo

- Murlo is a small community about 12 miles south of Siena in Tuscany. Just outside the town is the hill of Poggio Civitate, site of two distinct phases of one of the most important Etruscan monumental building complexes ever discovered.

- Murlo did not last, but it was an early aristocratic complex and a forerunner of later Etruscan cities. This is important because in its early phases—most clearly, before the 4th century B.C.—Etruscan society was organized around rule by aristocratic elites. Murlo also preserves the earliest evidence of the core of the Etruscan house and temple form.

- The first phase at Murlo, dating to the early 7th century B.C., consisted of three large buildings.
  - Building 1 was a monumental residence of an aristocratic family; Building 2 was the complex's primary area of industrial work during this phase. It housed numerous types of manufacturing, including bronze casting, bone and antler carving, food processing, and more. The tripartite form of Building 3, along with examples of luxurious inscribed vessels found there, suggest that it was a temple.

  - Nearby this complex is a building that preserves the industrial zone for this community. The residences of those who worked in the complex have not been found, probably because they were small mud-brick houses that eventually dissolved.

- Constructed almost immediately after the destruction by fire of the phase 1 complex at Murlo, the phase 2 structure—dating to about 600 B.C.—consisted of a massive four-winged building, enclosing central and southern courtyards. Each wing was 197 feet long; a western defensive work extended that façade an additional 98 feet.
  - The function of this building has been the subject of considerable debate. Theories include its use as a political meeting hall, a religious sanctuary, or a palace. Currently, the excavators believe that the building combined the functions of the three disparate structures of the earlier phase into a single edifice.

  - The central-room organization on the west wing, across the courtyard and opposite the main entrance, is significant. It consists of an open room with a water basin set in front of it in the courtyard, flanked by two small closed rooms. This room-and-basin arrangement is mirrored in later Roman domestic architecture. The tripartite division of space is a holdover from the temple building in the earlier phase and is a consistent feature of many later Etruscan temples.

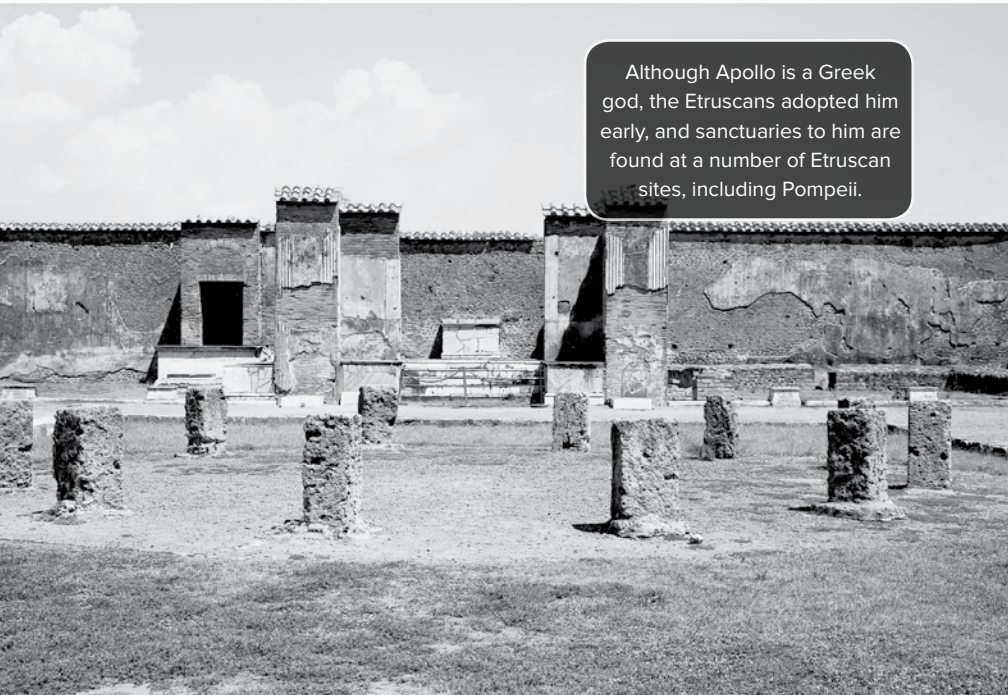
  - Like the buildings of the earlier complex, this structure was elaborately decorated with terra-cotta sculpture in the round that sat along the pitch of the roof. In addition, frieze plaques were nailed to exposed wooden beams. The images on these plaques, representing

a horserace, banquet, procession, and assembly, reveal much about Etruscan culture and central Italian art in the early 6th century B.C.

Pompeii

- Almost exactly contemporary with the second phase at Murlo was the founding of Pompeii. Although the site had been occupied earlier, what we can recognize as a city had its origins around 600 B.C. It seems to have been a product of the competition between Greek and Etruscan cities to colonize Campania. Like other Etruscan cities, Pompeii was a walled community built on a strategically important hill. It overlooks the sea and the mouth of the river Sarno.

- The original foundation of the excavated city is in the southwest corner, on the high ground surrounding what would become the forum. It is bracketed on the southwest by the Temple of Mephitis, on the southeast by the temple in the Triangular Forum, and on the north by the road that runs along the north edge of the forum and the Temple of Jupiter.



Although Apollo is a Greek god, the Etruscans adopted him early, and sanctuaries to him are found at a number of Etruscan sites, including Pompeii.

- The roads in this section of the town are famously irregular, in contrast to those laid out in careful blocks in later development. The oldest structure we can see is the Temple of Apollo.

- Traces of Etruscan walls found at Pompeii indicate that the entire hill was once enclosed. Gates in these walls probably had arched entranceways. The Romans later adopted such curved masonry from the Etruscans.

Marzabotto

- The Etruscan practice of building cities almost exclusively on hilltops endured, but the irregular winding streets and haphazard urban organization seen at Pompeii came to an end. In their stead emerged regular, rectangular grids—with streets that cross at right angles—reflecting orthogonal planning. This shift followed 5th-century-B.C. Greek innovations in city planning. A well-preserved example is the city of Marzabotto, an Etruscan settlement about 17 miles south of Bologna.

- By at least the 6th century B.C., there was already a settlement here, with small round houses, workshops, and at least one temple. But in the 5th century, the city was relocated to a high plateau overlooking the Reno River.

- The new city layout was oriented to the cardinal points and featured a long north-south main street just under 50 feet wide. Three east-west streets—each also about 50 feet wide—intersected the main road. These streets were almost exactly twice as wide as the contemporary streets at the Greek city of Olynthus, and all of them were paved, with sidewalks, gutters, and drains along the sides. Narrower roads, about 16 feet wide, ran parallel to the main street and divided the city into blocks.

- Unlike later Roman colonies that placed public buildings at the central crossroads, the identifiable religious and public buildings at Marzabotto were in one area, on the northern edge of the city. The blocks were mixed-use spaces, with houses and industrial areas grouped together in ways that suggest that they were the inheritors of the phase 2 design at

Murlo. Iron, bronze, and terra-cotta workshops have been excavated and seem to have been the source of the city's wealth.

- The houses are almost all the same size and design. They feature a set of rooms around a central courtyard, a pattern fairly common in the ancient Mediterranean. The core of the house was made up of three rooms in a row: a central open space flanked by two smaller closed rooms. This is the same pattern found first at Murlo and, before Marzabotto, at Aquarosso in the 6th century B.C.

- In Greek cities—particularly in Miletus—the new orthogonal design of the city went hand in hand with social and political change. At Miletus, the use of orthogonal planning was designed to reflect the new democratic social system. The even blocks of identical dimensions speak to the equal divisions in society, with parts for all citizens. The replacement of the 6th-century-B.C. city at Marzabotto with one that featured uniform blocks and identically sized houses may reflect a 5th-century-B.C. shift to a more egalitarian society.

- At Marzabotto, excavators discovered a large river stone etched with a cross buried at the main crossroads of the city. Further excavation revealed a number of similar but unmarked stones buried at other intersections. These seem to be the remains of the Etruscan inauguration ceremony. The point of the ceremony was to determine the will of the gods through the flights of birds, but first, it was necessary to impose upon the visible territory the Etruscan notion of the structure of the universe, which they viewed as being divided into equal quadrants.
  - Picture the way we subdivide a globe with longitudinal and latitudinal lines. For the Etruscans, that globe is not the earth but the cosmos. Lines that subdivide the earth continue out through the atmosphere.

  - Marzabotto seems to have been created by an augur standing in the northern section, where the religious structures were, and

looking south, directing the layout of the city according to the cardinal points that conformed to the Etruscan concept of the layout of creation.

Suggested Reading

Fulminante, *The Urbanisation of Roman and Latium Vetus*.

Steingräber, "The Process of Urbanization of Etruscan Settlements from the Late Villanovan to the Late Archaic Period."

Questions to Consider

1. In what ways do Etruscan cities differ from Greek or Roman cities in their layout? What do these differences tell us about Etruscan culture?
2. What do you make of the common domestic and sacred use of tripartite space as the core of Etruscan buildings? What does the fact that the Etruscans used this structure so consistently reveal about their view of society or the divine?

Lecture
3

Who Founded Rome?

Somewhat surprisingly, the Romans themselves believed that Rome had been an Etruscan city. In this lecture, we will examine the evidence, both physical and testimonial, for the Etruscan origin and culture of early Rome. In exploring this question, it's important to note that some of the ancient Roman sources seem to have been motivated by a desire to proclaim the exceptionalism of Rome and, thus, underplay foreign influences. Others, aware of Rome's "recent" rise to status as a world culture, were eager to associate Roman practices and traditions with older cultures to give them greater authority. We'll be aware of both biases as we examine the evidence for Rome's Etruscan roots.

The Setting and Layout of Rome

- Placed on a series of low hills, Rome had the same sort of siting and arrangement seen at the Etruscan city of Orvieto. And, like Marzabotto, Rome was founded on the only ford in a river, making it a natural crossroads for the region. It also had plentiful natural resources, including timber, the volcanic building stone tufa, and salt from the mouth of the Tiber.

- Given the continuous occupation of the city, it's somewhat difficult to discern Rome's urban design, but in the small areas that have been excavated down to the levels of its founding, we see patterns consistent with those found in Etruscan cities. The individual houses also seem to have been consistent with Etruscan designs, judging by archaeological remains and the house-shaped ash urns from the mid-8th century B.C. found at Vulci, Tarquinia, and Rome.

- An intriguing piece of evidence for Etruscan Rome is the Regia, the official home of the kings of Rome. It was built on a low spur of the Palatine Hill overlooking what would become the Forum Romanum. Roman authors

date its construction to the early kings, but it has been rebuilt so many times that the earliest layers are not preserved.

- What is preserved, however, is a 6th-century-B.C. phase from the reigns of later kings. In this phase, the structure is defined by a walled courtyard with a three-room suite directly across from the courtyard entrance. The suite consists of a large open room flanked by two smaller enclosed rooms.

- The layout matches almost exactly the core of the Etruscan houses found at Murlo, Aquarossa, and Marzabotto. Significantly, it's also founded exactly along an east-west axis. This is the earliest building in Rome to exhibit this sort of orientation, which was an important component of Etruscan urban design.

Etruscan Rule in Rome

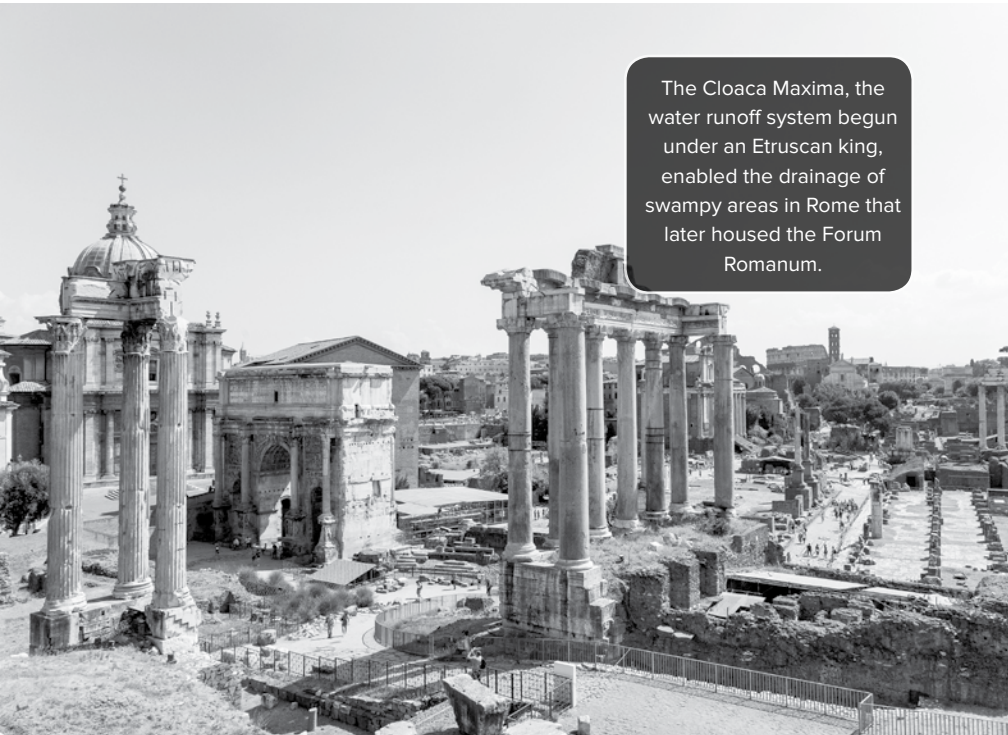
- Two parts of Rome were named for the Etruscans: the Caelian—one of the Seven Hills of Rome—and the Vicus Tuscus, the Etruscan quarter of Rome. According to the Roman historian Tacitus, the Etruscans were invited into the city by its rulers, suggesting that Rome's rulers had blood ties or other close relationships with rulers of the southern Etruscan communities. Although they don't agree on all the details, ancient sources testify that Etruscans ruled the city as the final three of its seven kings. How they came to do so is an interesting story.

- The Roman kings did not practice dynastic succession. Once a king died, his heir had to be acclaimed by the citizen body and voted on by the Senate. According to the tale, an Etruscan named Lucumo was married to a woman named Tanaquil, who had the power of prophecy. They immigrated to Rome, and on the way, an eagle swooped down, snatched Lucumo's hat off his head, flew around, then replaced the hat. Tanaquil interpreted this to mean that her husband would be king.

- Reaching Rome, he changed his name to Tarquinius Priscus, won the throne, and ruled the city for 38 years (616–578 B.C.). He is credited with bringing to Rome the Etruscan traditions of holding triumphal processions and riding in a *quadriga* (a ceremonial four-horse chariot).

- More importantly, Tanaquil was the agent for the succession of Servius Tullius, after seeing through another sign that he should be the next king.
  - After Servius's long rule (578–535 B.C.), the son of Tarquinius Priscus, Tarquinius Superbus, succeeded him as the third and last of the Etruscan dynasty and the final king of Rome (535–509 B.C.). Tarquin the Proud, as we know him in English, was responsible for a number of infrastructure improvements in Rome, including beginning the Cloaca Maxima ("Great Drain") and the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill.

  - In fact, the Roman pattern of elite beneficence—that is, of wealthy, elite individuals taking it upon themselves to pay for public buildings—seems to have begun with Tarquin the Proud. It is hard to overestimate the importance of that tradition to the form of the city of Rome and to the Roman world.



The Cloaca Maxima, the water runoff system begun under an Etruscan king, enabled the drainage of swampy areas in Rome that later housed the Forum Romanum.

Etruscan Public Buildings

- The infrastructure and architectural improvements in Rome under the Etruscan kings are similar in design and building style to those found in contemporary Etruscan communities. The Cloaca Maxima is an example.
  - This was a storm and runoff water system that drained all the standing water from the low, swampy areas in Rome and made it possible to move off the hills. Those areas included what later became the Forum Romanum and the Circus Maximus.

  - Public works by the Etruscan rulers of ancient Rome led directly to it being able to take its final form and create the open spaces that defined its public life.

- According to Pliny the Elder, the Roman encyclopedist from the 1st century A.D., before the Temple of Ceres was built in the 5th century B.C., everything at Rome was Tuscan (Etruscan) work. Pliny may have been speaking generally of Etruscan style, structures actually built by or under the Etruscans, or more specifically, buildings in the Tuscan order. The most well-preserved examples of this order probably appear in the columns on the ground floor of the exterior of the Colosseum and at the Theater of Marcellus, from the 1st century A.D. and B.C., respectively.

- Perhaps the greatest public work of Tarquin and the greatest temple ever built in ancient Rome was the Temple of Jupiter, the centerpiece of the Etruscan city. It represents the culmination of the massive public building programs of the last kings. It also became the central religious space in the community for more than 1,000 years.
  - For its time and for some two centuries afterwards, the Temple of Jupiter was one of the largest structures in the Mediterranean world. In form, the temple followed the Etruscan style rather than the Greek tradition. It was almost square and was built on a 16-foot-tall podium, instead of the low, three-step platform of the Greek temple. The temple was approached by a single flight of stairs across the south-facing front, unlike Greek temples, which were accessible from all sides.

  - The *cella* of the temple, divided into three separate shrines for Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, measured only about 100 feet. These

shrines followed the proportions of earlier Etruscan tripartite suites, with a broader central room and narrower side chambers, as seen at Murlo.

- The *cella* occupied only the rear half of the top of the platform. A porch that covered as much area as the *cella* occupied the front half. The roof above the porch was supported by 24 giant Tuscan-style columns. This forest of columns and deep porch pattern is a holdover from earlier Etruscan buildings.

- The roofing system was terra-cotta, and the temple was topped by a series of terra-cotta *acroteria*—decorative ornaments, such as a statues. The cult statue was terra-cotta, as well, and it and the *acroteria* were the work of an Etruscan sculptor, Vulca of Veii.

- The Forum Boarium, between Rome's hills and the Tiber River, was the area that saw more traffic and trade than any other in early Rome.
  - On the lower slope of the Capitoline, facing the Tiber and overlooking the market, was a sanctuary datable to the 6th century B.C., the period of the Etruscan kings. It consisted of two temples, identified as those of Fortuna and Mater Matuta, both of which were Etruscan in style. Each small temple was set on a high podium with a frontal set of steps and a deep porch leading to a *cella* along the back of the platform, all elements found in earlier Etruscan religious architecture.

  - Like the small houses on the hills, the temples were probably originally built of perishable materials, including timber roofs that were covered in terra-cotta tiles and decorative components. Many of these early terra-cotta elements survive, including a three-quarter life-size *acroterion* sculpture group of Minerva and Hercules.

  - These temples played an important role in the succession of the Etruscan kings. Because Roman kings were chosen by election, they needed some means of demonstrating their authority to rule and the sanction of the gods. The Temple of Mater Matuta was the site of

one of these sanctioning ceremonies, in which the right to rule was bestowed on the Etruscan king by a priestess.

- Additional evidence for Etruscan Rome comes from inscriptions, perhaps the most important of which is an inscribed ivory lion plaque from the sanctuary. The plaque bears an Etruscan inscription and an elite Etruscan name known from the city of Tarquinia. Such inscriptions provoke much interest, not simply because of their early dates (late 7th–early 6th centuries B.C.), but also because they provide evidence of Etruscan contact with Rome and support conclusions of an Etruscan Rome during the 6th century B.C.

- The evidence of public buildings and service doesn't prove an Etruscan Rome, but it does point to a Rome as open to influence from Etruria as it was from Greece and many other cultures whose contributions would eventually become indistinguishable in the cultural makeup of Rome.

Conclusions about Rome's Origins

- Those who argue against an Etruscan origin for the city of Rome have a more difficult time proving their case.
  - First, they must concede that the final three kings of Rome constituted an Etruscan dynasty. All of the evidence and witnesses support that.

  - In addition, Rome had a rich literary tradition attesting to its founding by a group of refugees from the Trojan War, led by Aeneas. The problem with this story is that it came about much later, and no actual Trojan customs accompanied the myth to Rome.

- The preponderance of evidence seems to be in favor of the hypothesis that Rome was an Etruscan city. The setting; urban layout; orientation of the Regia; forms of the early houses; and placement, design, decoration, and use of its temples all parallel Etruscan practice. Further, the many Etruscan inscriptions suggest that all the other features represent more than simply Roman adoption of Etruscan cultural practices; rather, these features were used in Rome by Etruscans themselves.

Suggested Reading

Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome*.

Holloway, *The Archaeology of Early Rome and Latium*.

Smith, *Early Rome and Latium*.

Questions to Consider

1. Change question to read: "Does the fact that Rome had Etruscan rulers lead you to conclude that it was an Etruscan city or merely occupied by a foreign force, as some scholars argue?
2. What does the cultural continuity between Rome and Etruscan cities to the north tell us about the city of Rome, its founding, and its early periods?

Lecture
4

Etruscan Cities of the Dead

The Etruscan burial ground is not referred to as a cemetery but as a *necropolis*, literally a "city of the dead." For their necropoleis, the Etruscans laid out cities and carved houses—truly houses for eternity—out of solid rock. Of course, implicit in this activity is the idea of life after death. In addition, the use of houses as the organizing principle for a cemetery reveals the family as the major identity group. This may seem natural to us, but in many cultures, including the Greek and Roman, the extended family was not buried together in multigenerational tombs. In this lecture, we'll explore unique Etruscan burial practices that set them apart from their ancient neighbors.

Banditaccia Necropolis

- One of the best sites to study Etruscan tombs and the development of residential architecture and city planning is the Banditaccia necropolis at the Etruscan city of Caere (modern Cerveteri). This necropolis is the largest surviving one from the ancient Mediterranean; it contains thousands of tombs organized along roads with gutters, drains, and sidewalks, all elements cut out of solid rock and taken from Etruscan urban planning.

- The tombs in the Banditaccia necropolis date from the 8th to the 3rd centuries B.C., with the earliest examples being large circular grass-covered mounds, a type referred to as a *tumulus*. The interiors of these tombs, often three or four to a mound, were carved out of volcanic bedrock.

- Two design features found repeatedly in the tombs are seen in contemporary Etruscan and later Roman building practice in both houses and temples.
  - The first feature is that the tombs/houses are organized symmetrically with a long axis; the entrance is placed at a short end and the rooms are clustered at the far end.

- The second feature is a tendency toward tripartite organization, with both rooms and wall niches for bodies often appearing in groups of three.

- The Tomb of the Shields and Chairs at Cerveteri seems to be designed to reflect Etruscan domestic architecture. Although carved out of solid rock, it has elements of wood construction: ceiling beams, door frames, and moldings. The layout includes features adopted in later Roman houses, including a central hallway leading into a single common room—the atrium in a Roman house. Opposite the entrance is a three-room suite with a wider central room flanked by two smaller side rooms, features that reflect tripartite temples, as well as the Roman *tablinum*.

- The 8th- and 7th-century-B.C. tombs are carved with a consistent organization of a central passage leading to and flanked by a series of generally symmetrically arranged chambers that are believed to imitate the room size, shape, and organization of Etruscan houses.

- In early examples, such as the Tomb of the Painted Lions at Cerveteri (c. 650 B.C.), two chambers flank the long passage and a third is carved at the end opposite the arched doorway leading into the tumulus. It's possible that each chamber represented a house and, therefore, that this was a tomb for three (presumably related) families. Interestingly, although carved out of solid rock, the rooms have many irregular features, such as nonparallel walls and curving ceilings, that seem to reflect actual building practice only a few generations past the single-room, oval, wattle-and-daub houses of the mid-8th century B.C.

- Many of the tombs are carved to resemble the timber framing and other perishable materials used to construct normal Etruscan houses. In early tombs, the actual roofing above the rafters seems to be thatching. In slightly later tombs (650–600 B.C.), above the rafters, the stone carvers chiseled the edges of the overlapping terra-cotta roof tiles, which would have been visible from inside the house. This provides critical evidence of the shift from organic to more permanent materials in Etruscan home construction.

- Tombs from the period 600 to 550 B.C. demonstrate the shift to completely rectilinear architecture, thought to replicate actual cut-stone block construction, which was a major development over wattle and daub. Most tombs of this period have elements that were necessary in a real house, including a central ridge beam that runs along the length of the roof with timber joists attached to it, all supported by columns and pillars.

The Tomb of the Capitals

- An excellent example of a tomb from the period 600 to 550 B.C. is the Tomb of the Capitals. Superficially, it resembles earlier tombs, with a passageway, a pair of side chambers, and multiple burial chambers at the end. But we can see clear architectural developments.

- Rather than an oval space, the passageway terminates in a rectangular antechamber, which leads to three rectangular burial chambers beyond. The antechamber is decorated with eight carved beds running along the walls and contains two columns supporting the faux wood roof beams and rafters. The capitals of these columns, from which the tomb takes its name, are Aeolic in style. Their appearance here is solid evidence that the Etruscans were culturally connected to the major civilizations of the eastern Mediterranean.

- Each of the three rectangular burial chambers holds a pair of beds, probably for married couples. This suggests that Etruscan women held something close to positions of equality to men in both life and death, a pattern not found in other Mediterranean civilizations.

Shifting Political Structures

- The Tomb of the Shields and Chairs (c. 520–500 B.C.) is important not for its form—which is almost identical to the Tomb of the Capitals—but for its furniture. In addition to pairs of beds in each of three burial chambers, the furnishings consist of two large chairs with footstools carved from the bedrock. Above each, hanging on the wall, is a shield. The chairs are rounded forms with circular backs and arms above the flat seats. Their closest comparisons from the ancient world are the chairs of Roman priests and magistrates, which served as visible symbols of office and rank.

- The carved chairs and shields reflect the two outlets for elite male competition: warfare, symbolized by the shields, and government service, symbolized by the chairs conferred upon community magistrates. Together, they reveal a new identification of men, not by their family relationships but by their public roles. The increase in the appearance of these symbols during the course of the 6th century B.C. reflects the political changes of that period, a time when many peoples around the Mediterranean were establishing democratic or republican forms of government over the kings and tyrants who had ruled them earlier.

- It seems that in the 5th century B.C., cities in the Etruscan world saw rapid social and economic shifts that mirrored the political. As the kings and hereditary aristocracies lost power, they were replaced by a rising "middle class." The citizens, soldiers, and merchants of this class became the new leaders and economic engines of their communities. They took positions as elected public officials and priests, replacing the old aristocracies.

- The social pyramid that had a small group at the top who ruled and held the majority of the wealth flattened out considerably. Wealth seems to have spread more widely, probably because of trade and the vast commercial links between the Etruscans and all the peoples of the central Mediterranean. This shift in social structure is seen in the adoption of orthogonal planning and mirrored in the necropoleis of the Etruscan world.

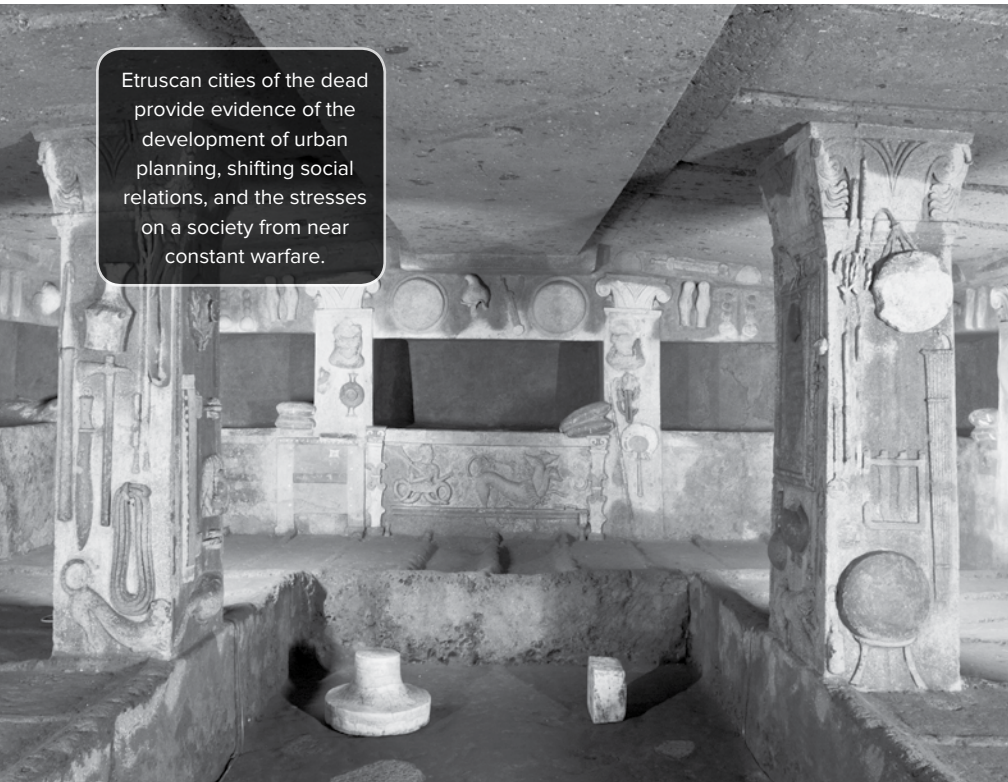
- Another necropolis that reveals this shift to orthogonal planning is the Crocifisso del Tufo, just outside the Etruscan city of Orvieto. This necropolis has a series of orthogonally aligned streets and blocks with rows of small rectangular single- or double-chamber tombs built adjacent to each other. It's as though the necropolis preserves a new section of the city composed of townhouses laid out in blocks rather than freestanding atrium-style houses.

- Perhaps the clearest visual record of this shift is found at the Banditaccia necropolis outside Cerveteri. The old tumulus tombs abut against new 4th-

century-B.C. lines of square tombs constructed out of blocks of cut stone rather than carved from the bedrock. These lines of identical tombs along streets and blocks that demonstrate orthogonal planning show the dramatic changes that occurred in the Etruscan world during the 5th century B.C., with increased democratization and the dissolution of aristocratic society.

The Tomb of the Reliefs

- Just as we saw in the Tomb of the Shields and Chairs, the Tomb of the Reliefs (3rd century B.C.) at the Banditaccia necropolis was constructed for an extended family. But here, rather than a space with separate houses for the branches of the family, the tomb is composed of a single chamber. The walls are broken by carved niches for bodies that are separated by shallow pilasters. The niches resemble beds, to the point of having bedding and realistic pillows carved from the bedrock.



Etruscan cities of the dead provide evidence of the development of urban planning, shifting social relations, and the stresses on a society from near constant warfare.

- The tripartite division of chambers in previous tombs is preserved here in a somewhat vestigial form, with the back wall of the chamber carved with three burial niches, thought to be the most prestigious locations in the tomb. A raised ledge about 20 inches high runs around the walls on all sides, deep enough to hold 32 additional bodies laid out shoulder to shoulder with their heads facing the wall and feet toward the center of the room.

- Relief carving covers virtually every surface, making the tomb a critical source for information on the daily life of the Etruscans. Much of the raised relief work in stucco preserves its original color, giving us a good sense of how tombs and houses might have originally looked. The reliefs reproduce tools and household objects, all seemingly hanging on the wall ready for use. A relief frieze running around the room above the wall niches also illustrates armor and weapons, including swords, shields, helmets, and greaves (shin armor).

- All this detailed stone carving points to the likelihood of each Etruscan city having its own workforce of skilled stone carvers to create the tombs in its necropolis. Regional variations on tomb carving support this conclusion.
  - The existence of these carvers may explain the appearance of certain Etruscan architectural features in the grotto of the Sibyl in the Greek city of Cumae: The features were carved by Etruscan stone workers taken as prisoners of war in the naval Battle of Cumae in 474 B.C.

  - Although there's no real proof of this theory beyond the remarkably comparable carving, there's nothing to argue against it, nor are there any good Greek precedents for the work. It's intriguing to think that one of the most significant Greek religious spaces and the site of the Greeks' greatest oracle in the western Mediterranean might owe its form to Etruscan prisoners of war.

Suggested Reading

Marini, "A Study of the Architectonic Development of the Great Funerary Tumuli in the Etruscan Necropolises of Cerveteri."

Steingräber, *Abundance of Life*.

Questions to Consider

1. What does the contrast between timber and mud-brick cities and stone necropoleis say about Etruscan values and priorities?
2. How are aspects of Etruscan society, such as gender roles, class, and social and political status, conveyed through their tombs?

Lecture 5

Etruscan Burial and Mourning

How people are mourned and how bodies are prepared for final deposition are among the most conservative and characteristic components of cultures. For that reason, they can remain as evidence of a culture's practices long after other cultural markers have been eliminated by change or dominance from the outside. They generally change quite slowly and only in reaction to enormous pressures, usually ones that threaten the culture or society in existential ways. In this lecture, we'll examine features of burial practice—from the period immediately after death to the final burial and beyond—to see what they can tell us about Etruscan beliefs and cultural priorities.

Funeral Rituals

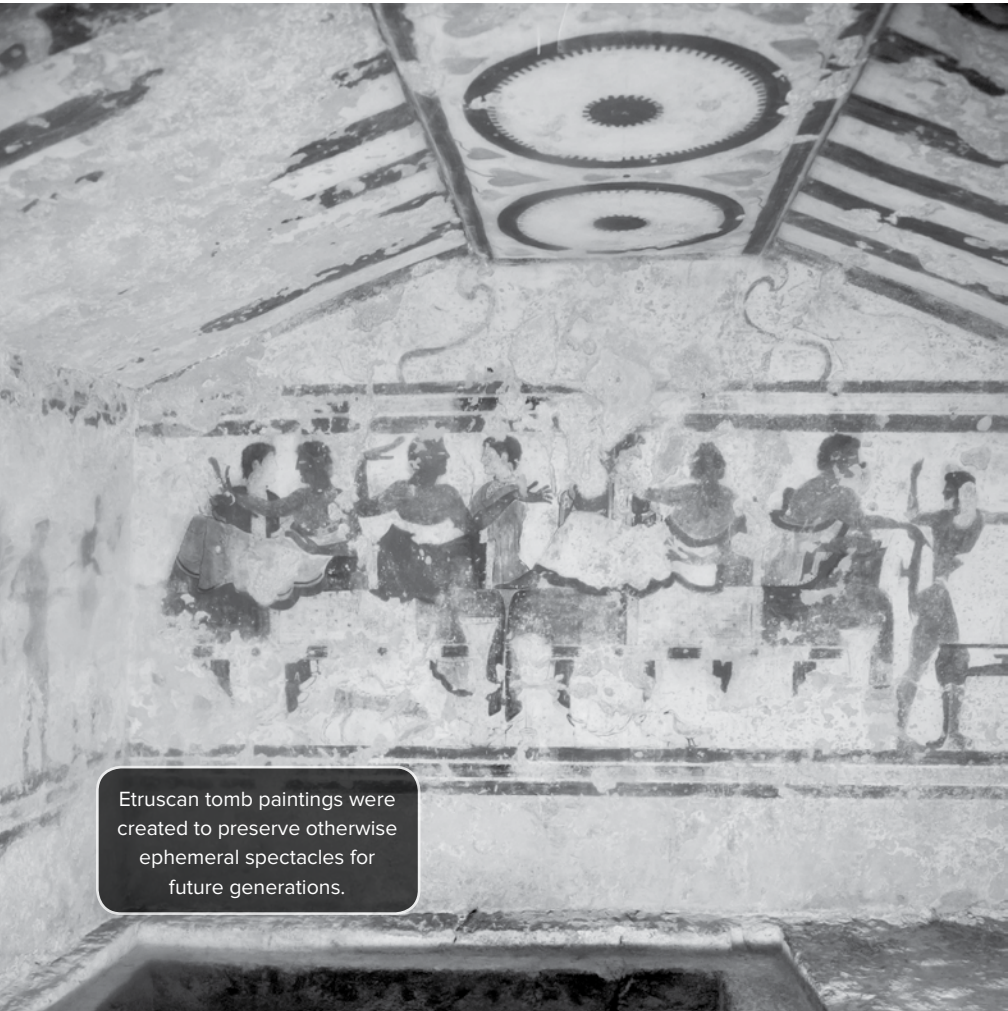
- Etruscan funeral rituals had a number of common elements: a period of lying in state for the deceased, a funeral procession, games, dance, sacrifice, ritual meals, and the deposition of the deceased with grave goods.

- Tomb paintings from Tarquinia show that after death, the deceased Etruscan was laid out in a room of the home for mourners to visit. The Tarquinia paintings show bodies laid on couches, anointed with oils, and covered with garlands. The design of Etruscan tombs after their houses seems to connect the original lying in state of the deceased in the home with the final deposition in the eternal home, the tomb.

- The linkage between home and tomb was made by the funeral procession. These processions included the deceased, the family, grave goods, animals for sacrifice, and mourners, all walking to the extramural necropolis, where the remainder of the funerary rituals would take place.

- The best evidence for the procession is a wall painting from the Tomb of the Typhon at Tarquinia. The painting shows a procession of 16 figures, including humans and demons.

- This procession might represent the journey of the deceased to the underworld or the funeral itself—not a spiritual journey to the



Etruscan tomb paintings were created to preserve otherwise ephemeral spectacles for future generations.

underworld but a physical one to the tomb. The demons and infernal figures might be costumed priests.

- The most spectacular and among the most commonly illustrated parts of the Etruscan funeral were the games held in honor of the deceased. These were sponsored by the surviving family, which had a vested interest in creating lavish games that would reflect well on both the deceased and themselves.
  - A variety of athletic contests could be held, with prizes for the winners. For example, a painting in the Tomb of the Augurs at Tarquinia (c. 500 B.C.) shows wrestlers and boxers with a stack of cauldrons, a common Greek prize for athletic events. These figures are drawn in Greek style, again highlighting the reliance on Greek models for Etruscan art.

  - Perhaps the largest of the paintings of athletic funeral games is found in the Tomb of the Olympic Games. The paintings here show a footrace, discus throwers, the long jump, boxers, and a chariot race. It's unclear whether these images reflect actual games at the funeral of this Etruscan or are a symbolic display representative of the piety of the family in honoring the deceased.

- Perhaps related to the games is the least understood part of the funeral: dancing. We don't know if this was participatory on the part of the mourners or a performance for their benefit.
  - A bronze tablet with records of Etruscan rituals lists among the key rituals for a funeral "dance the *tripudium*." Given the context, it seems to be the priests dancing, certainly an activity known from the Roman world, where priests had a host of different dances, including war dances.

  - In addition to the text, images of Etruscan funerary dances survive on the lids of bronze cinerary urns.

- The central element of the funerary ritual was a sacrifice, and for the Etruscans, this meant blood sacrifice—perhaps even human sacrifice.

- In some instances, spirits of the ancient world were appeased by blood sacrifice. In other cases, such as the occasion when Odysseus provides blood for the souls in the underworld (Book XI, *Odyssey*), the sacrifice literally animated the spirits so that they could communicate with the living.

- The Italian archaeologist Mario Torelli argued that the sacrifices in Etruscan funeral rituals took place on the grassy areas on top of tombs to allow the blood to seep down to the dead, conferring on them immortality.

- After an animal sacrifice, the meat of the animal was consumed, generally along with wine. These funerary meals were held at the culmination of the funeral to honor the dead, to create a formal end to the mourning period, and sometimes to give the family of the deceased an outlet for generosity, as the dinners might be shared with the wider community.

- Given that the dead were expected to live again and that they were buried in tombs that were symbolic houses, it stands to reason that they would be buried with the materials they would need to continue their lives. They were laid out on beds wearing clothing, jewelry, and armor and were surrounded by household items, including ceramics and bronze objects.

Cremation and Inhumation

- The Etruscans practiced both cremation and inhumation (grave burial). Cremation was common at Chiusi, while inhumation is found at other communities, such as Cerveteri and Veii. Both forms of burial utilized sarcophagi; the former used smaller ones as urns for ashes and the latter, life-size ones.
  - Each burial seems designed to preserve and celebrate the identity and social status of the deceased and, in some cases, their primary relationships, such as marriage. In all cases, these elements are celebrated through imagery, sometimes supplemented by inscriptions and high-status accessories.

  - This desire to create spaces and materials to project individual identity developed in a number of surprising ways; in particular, it

seems to have been the key instigator for the emergence of Etruscan portraiture.

- In some periods and places, the Etruscans practiced cremation, placing the ashes of the deceased in an urn. Many of these urns in the 7th century B.C. were closed vessels in bronze or terra-cotta topped by an anthropomorphic (human-shaped) lid.
  - These human-headed urns developed from an earlier type of urn topped by a bronze helmet to indicate the warrior status of the deceased. This development took place in stages. For example, the urn handles became human arms, and the urns became full, hollow statues with the ashes placed inside, leaving no doubt that they provide an early type of portraiture and are meant to convey an image of the deceased.

  - The body and the chair or bed on which it rests were made separately. In many cases, the chair is bronze, sometimes decorated with relief work. The chairs are a highly symbolic Etruscan image, signifying elite male status; they may originally have been thrones or, more likely in the later periods, the chairs used by magistrates in local government.

  - The individualized face on an urn was intended to represent the male whose ashes rested within. Very often, the faces were pierced with holes for the attachment of a mask. Funeral masks were another Etruscan custom adopted by the Romans, particularly to transmit the images of elite males through the family.

Gendered Burials

- Some Etruscan burials show evidence of clear gender roles: Men get shields and chairs, armor and weapons, and women get domestic material. In addition, symbols of the deceased seem to be gendered, with male burials marked on the exterior by short pillars and women by stone spheres. On the insides of the tombs, female burials are marked by triangular pediments, representing houses and the domestic identities of women.

- Perhaps the most celebrated work of Etruscan terra-cotta sculpture is a sarcophagus for a married couple found in a tomb in the Banditaccia necropolis at Cerveteri and dating from about 500 B.C. Although the nearly life-size figures appear at first glance to be sculpted in the round, the sarcophagus is better understood as a work of very high relief, emphasizing the upper bodies and faces.
  - A great deal of attention was paid to surface detail and pattern, as seen in the treatment of the fabric the figures wear, which drapes around their bodies. Partially due to the use of terra-cotta—which allows greater surface detail and more unsupported limbs than marble would—the figures are quite expressive, reclining together on the couch with the man's right arm across his wife's back and resting on her right shoulder.

  - The gestures of their hands show the Etruscan interest in accurately portraying the details of nature. The gestures indicate that the deceased were probably each holding objects related to funerary rituals, such as small perfume flasks, garlands, wine cups, or eggs.

  - The pose of the couple illustrates Etruscan social customs, with husband and wife dining together on a banqueting couch—in contrast to the elite Greek practice, which at that time showed two males on a couch, not a man and woman.

- The imagery of couples continued in Etruscan tomb and funerary art for centuries. Eventually, however, the apparent optimism of the earlier figures was replaced by an equally apparent pessimism. One example is found in a tomb of the late 4th century B.C. from Tarquinia that shows a married couple reclining on a couch. They each rest a hand on the other's near shoulder as if in comfort.

- This apparent equality is not to say that men and women were treated identically in life or death. In some tombs, such as the Tomb of Chairs and Shields and the Tomb of the Reliefs, it is evident that men held privileged positions. This is certain in later tombs, from the 3rd century B.C. on, when the social, political, and military upheavals had begun in the Etruscan world. It is also possible that the shift from aristocratic to democratic forms

of government demonstrates the loss of the seeming equality between elite men and women seen in earlier periods.

- A variety of factors could contribute to this. First, women are essential in hereditary forms of government, such as monarchies, where dynastic succession is critical and based on heirs of elite married couples succeeding in the transfer of power.

- We also can't discount the effect on Etruscan culture of living under siege from the Romans; the Etruscans found themselves relying more on their military to ensure the survival of their communities. Such conditions likely enhanced the status of those serving in the military at the expense of the traditional power structure of aristocrats, causing elite women to suffer with their men.

Suggested Reading

Naso, "Etruscan Style of Dying."

Pieraccini, "Families, Feasting, and Funerals."

Questions to Consider

1. How can we reconcile the idea of an eternally peaceful afterlife with the evidence for human sacrifice in Etruscan burial practices?
2. How do the components of Etruscan burial rituals differ from or compare to those in other cultures, such as those of the Greeks, Romans, or even ours? Do they teach us anything about universal needs?

Lecture 6

Etruscan Afterlife

There seem to have been either two separate routes to the Etruscan underworld or two stages on the route, one by sea and one by land. Once the deceased made the journey, he or she reached an underworld of unending cheer, where dancing, games, and feasting took place in a perfectly temperate climate, with no rain or cold. After about 400 B.C., however, this conception of the underworld changed dramatically. It became a place of torment, populated by monsters and demons. In this lecture, we'll explore the Etruscan view of the afterlife and look at some of the changes it underwent as a result of unending war and loss in the world of the living Etruscans.

Routes to the Underworld

- Many cultures define the edges of their paradises or afterlife spaces by rivers. We might think of the rivers that define the edges of the Garden of Eden or of the Greek underworld and the journey over the river Styx. The Etruscans, however, envisioned something grander, a voyage across the sea to an island paradise.

- One stage of this journey seems to have involved the deceased diving into the sea. Images of someone undertaking that dive are found in the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing at Tarquinia (c. 530 B.C.) and the Tomb of the Diver at Paestum (c. 480 B.C.).
  - The back wall of the burial chamber in the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing has two major figural scenes: a banquet scene with a couple reclining at a meal and a depiction of men fishing in what seems to be an ideal natural world, perhaps representing the afterlife. In the second scene, a young man dives into the water, while a spectator seems to applaud. Scholars conclude that the image is a symbol of the transition from life to afterlife.

- The Tomb of the Diver consists of five slabs of local limestone, four of which make the walls of the tomb while the fifth is the tomb's roof. A painted scene on the interior of this flat roof shows a young man diving off a platform into a body of water below. The meaning of the scene is again thought to be metaphorical. As in the earlier tomb, it shows the passage of the deceased from life to death and from this world into the underworld.

- These dives might be the initial step in the journey to the afterlife on an ideal island. This island could be similar to the Greek Islands of the Blessed or the White Island, where many Greek heroes were said to make their residence in the afterlife. Unlike the Greek heroes, who seem to travel to the island smoothly and instantaneously upon death, the Etruscans needed to travel on the back of a sea monster called, in Greek, a *hippocampus*. In art, this creature looks like a carousel animal with a fish body and horse's head and neck, sometimes with a dorsal fin mane.
  - The hippocampus first had to be defeated in combat. In scenes of this combat, a warrior on shore faces a hippocampus in the water. He is identified as a warrior because he is male and armed, sometimes directly attacking the monster.

  - Although the armed confrontations always show male warriors, elsewhere, women traveling to the land of the dead are depicted riding hippocampi. Thus, the land is not an exclusively male region, as the Greek Elysium was.

- The hippocampus is a conveyance to the land of the dead, but it doesn't seem to be a guide. The guide was necessary for the land portion of the journey, probably leading up to the final water barrier where the hippocampus was overcome. In Etruscan belief, the guide is Vanth, a beautiful winged female figure. In some funerary art, she stands beside a door, the barrier between this world and the next. In other examples, she is present at the moment of death, reaching out for the soul to take it by the hand the minute it leaves the body.

- Travel by land takes a variety of forms in tomb art. Some of the deceased carry knotty walking sticks; others ride two- or four-horse chariots or ride in the backs of wagons.

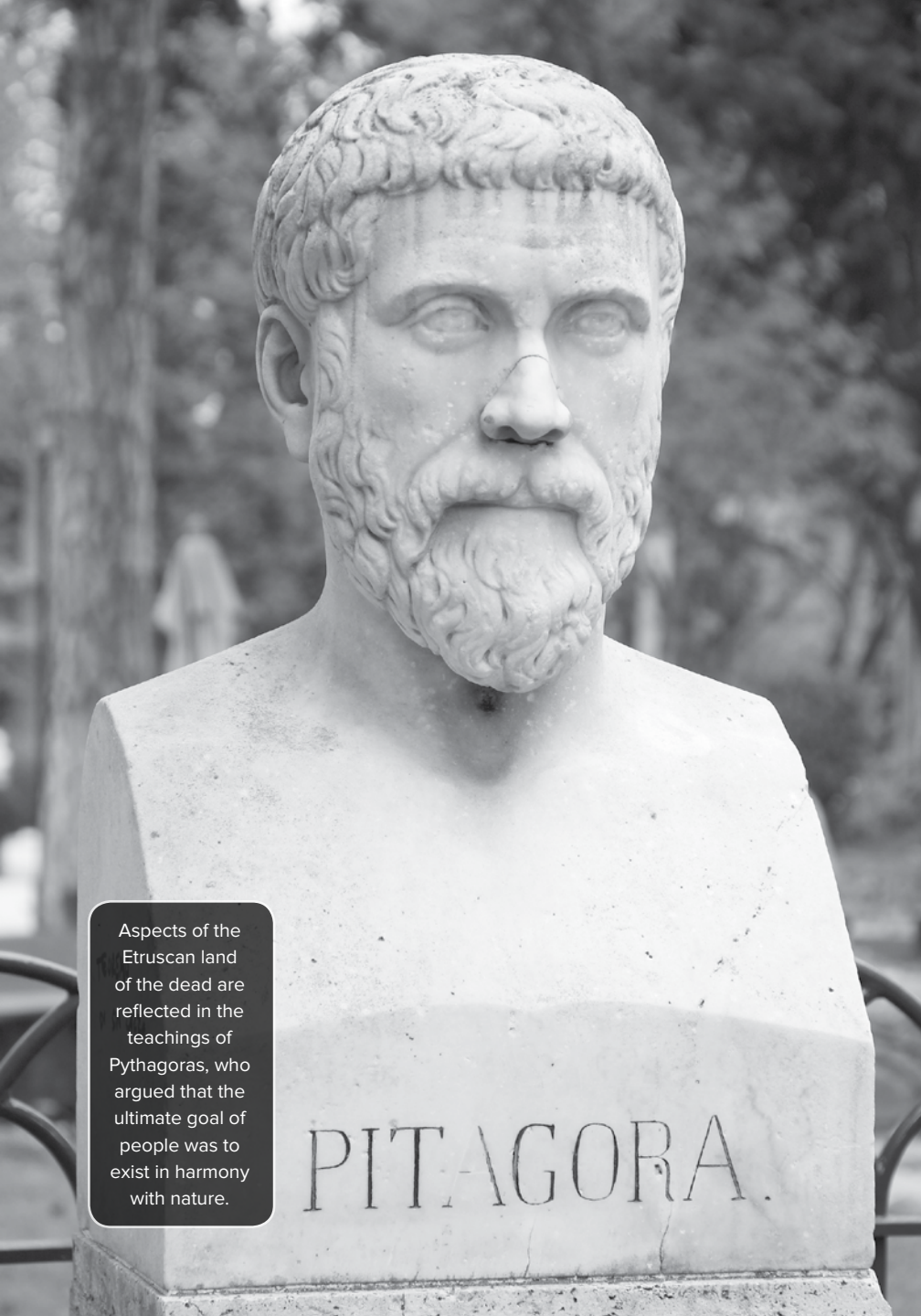
The Etruscan Afterlife

- The Etruscans believed in an idealized, perpetually wonderful afterlife of peace and plenty—a world of dancing, music, games, and feasting. The best description of this land of the dead comes from the Roman poet Vergil, writing about a visit to the underworld by his mythical hero Aeneas. There, Aeneas sees figures exercising, competing in sports, dancing, and singing.

- It's perhaps surprising to note that the Etruscans' ideal life for the dead is all outdoors, with few if any of the trappings of their urban world: no buildings, roads, bridges, government, explicit religion, or need to making a living through farming or manufacturing. The Etruscans' afterlife is nothing like their real world, although it has some trappings of their culture, such as music, dance, and athletic contests.

- From the 4th century B.C. on, we see many of the figures and structures of the Greek underworld creep into Etruscan belief. First and foremost, the ideal landscape disappears. Instead, figures in the land of the dead appear shrouded or surrounded by clouds or mists; where they are in color, they often appear black. This underworld may reflect the Greek notion of the gray, nothing existence that caused Achilles to tell Odysseus, upon his visit to the land of the dead, that it would be better to be a poor man's slave in life than a king in the underworld.

- In the 4th century B.C., Hades and Persephone appear in the underworld, known in Etruscan as Aita and Phersipnei. Although they are recognizable as the Greek king and queen of the underworld, they have some Etruscan attributes. Aita wears a wolf skin similar to Hercules's lion skin, and Phersipnei wears Etruscan garb and has snakes in her hair. Serpents of various forms begin to appear in the art of the underworld at this time. They are joined by what can only be called demons and monsters of various forms, all new to the Etruscan afterlife.



Aspects of the Etruscan land of the dead are reflected in the teachings of Pythagoras, who argued that the ultimate goal of people was to exist in harmony with nature.

- As with the rise of military equipment in tombs and tomb paintings that show sadder visages, we also see a change in the images and ideas of the afterlife beginning in the 4th century B.C. Again, scholars attribute this gloomier afterlife to the chaos and pessimism that accompanied the relentless Roman military victories and the loss of Etruscan land, cities, and culture in the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. The land of the dead was no longer an ideal world that improved on this life but a reflection of this life with its associated terrors and threats.

- While the Greeks had the ferryman Charon, who rowed the dead in a boat across the river Styx, the Etruscans had a figure named Charu who waited by the door to the underworld with Vanth. Unlike Charon or Vanth, however, Charu was not benign. His face was hideous, and he carried a large hammer. He seemed to be guarding the door to the underworld, perhaps to keep out the uninvited or to corral the demons who would spill out into the land of the living.

- Another terrifying demon was Tuchulcha, which had the large beak of a vulture, the ears of a donkey, wild hair and a beard, snakes in its hair, and wings. A number of other monsters also populated the later Etruscan underworld. Many of these were based on Greek models. They may have tormented the souls of the deceased in the underworld or served to block the route. One prominent example of these monsters is found in a depiction of Cerberus and Scylla in the Tomb of the Reliefs (c. 300 B.C.) at Cerveteri.

- Many of these new components of the afterlife are found together in the paintings in a tomb opened in 2003 near Chiusi: the Tomb of the Infernal Chariot. The passage leading into the tomb is painted with figures that represent some of the obstacles on the path to the underworld, including a demon driving a chariot, a snake or dragon, and a hippocampus.

Shifting Conceptions of the Underworld

- The shift from an underworld of bliss and recreation to one of torment represents a dramatic turn of events in Etruscan belief and, as we've suggested, could reflect an existential crisis in the Etruscan world. As mentioned, the epic Battle of Cumae (474 B.C.) against the Greeks led to

the loss of Etruscan lands in southern Italy, which at that point included almost a third of all Etruscan communities.

- Around the key date of 400 B.C., we also see other catastrophic losses. In 415 B.C., the Etruscans, seeking revenge for the Battle of Cumae, allied with Athens in the Sicilian expedition against Syracuse. This was the greatest military blunder in Athenian history and, again, resulted in defeat for the Etruscans. Further, an invasion of territories in the Etruscans' central homeland began almost immediately following that loss, weakening their cities.

- In 396 B.C., the city of Veii, one of the 12 greatest Etruscan communities in Etruria, was sacked and looted by Rome after a 10-year siege. In the same year, the Etruscans lost the Battle of Melpum against Celts who had settled the Po River valley, the northern Etruscan stronghold. Finally, in 384 B.C., the coastal sanctuary at Pyrgi was attacked and looted by Dionysius of Syracuse. This attack demonstrated that the Etruscans had lost control of the sea routes on which they relied for trade and security.

- All these losses of men, territory, cities, and sanctuaries could easily have created the context for a more dire view of the afterlife and the idea of suffering and torment, which hadn't been components of the Etruscan underworld in previous periods.

Suggested Reading

de Grummond, *Etruscan Myth, Sacred History, and Legend*.

Krauskopf, "The Grave and beyond in Etruscan Religion," in *The Religion of the Etruscans*, de Grummond and Simon, eds.

Questions to Consider

1. The idealized afterlife of early Etruscan culture is literally bucolic. What do you make of the anti-urban, anti-architectural nature of this vision? Is nature the ideal space in the Etruscan mindset?

2. How do you account for the dramatic shift in the vision of the afterlife from the ideal to the threatening? Do the military losses of the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. seem like a plausible explanation?

Lecture
7

Etruscan Gods and Goddesses

The Greek philosopher Xenophanes said that if horses had gods, their gods would look like horses. The forms and powers of deities reflect the societies that worship them, and in this, the Etruscans are no different from other societies. The forms, powers, and spheres of influence of the major deities tell us about Etruscan concepts of the creation and structure of the universe and the organization of the world. Etruscan deities are more benign and act more collectively and less confrontationally than Greek or Roman gods. The Etruscan religion, therefore, tends to be more about understanding and less about placating the divine. In this lecture, we'll note some general tendencies about the Etruscan pantheon and look at individual deities.

Characteristics of Etruscan Gods

- Etruscan gods and goddesses had comparatively complex identities and, in many cases, were associated with a great number of natural phenomena, life events, and social structures. For example, it wouldn't be inconsistent for the goddess of childrearing to also take up arms and fight in war. In other religions, such as that of the Greeks, these associations were divided up among a larger number of divinities.

- Unlike the Greek deities, who were relatively autonomous in their spheres of influence, Etruscan gods and goddesses tended to act collectively, rather than individually. One manifestation of this can be seen in the number of paired or twin deities in Etruscan belief, including the paired rulers of the underworld, Aita and Phersipnei.

- It's also notable that initially—before about 600 B.C.—the Etruscans seem not to have created representations of their gods. The deities were amorphous, and in fact, many were not ever fully anthropomorphized. By the Archaic period of the 6th century B.C., however, the Etruscan deities appeared generally as humans; eventually, under the influence of Greek

art, they took on the attributes and imagery of Greek deities who were approximately equivalent to them.

Head of the Etruscan Pantheon: Tinia

- The principal god of the Etruscans was Tinia, whose name derives from the Etruscan word for "day," *tin*. In some ways, he is similar to more familiar gods who head pantheons, such as Zeus. He is a sky god, known as Apa, "father," who appears as a mature, bearded man. He is often portrayed with a thunderbolt in one or both hands, which he threw as a signal that he had passed judgment in a particular situation. This marks a peacemaking element in his personality.

- Tinia was also a god of boundaries and played a role in organizing the cosmos and controlling the division and use of land. That connection to land is seen in his further control over weather that might damage crops, such as wind and rain. Most surprisingly—and unlike Zeus or Jupiter—he is also associated with the underworld.

- Although frequently compared to Zeus or Jupiter, Tinia seems to have his closest parallel in the Norse god Odin, the Allfather. Odin was also a weather god, king of the gods, and bringer of victory in war, and he had an underworld aspect: welcoming newly deceased warriors into the land of the dead. It's notable that the Etruscan word for their group of nine gods was the *Aesir*, the same name the Norse gave their collective gods.

- One of the most significant characteristics of Zeus and of Greek heroes is autonomous violence. That is, Zeus smites who he wants, without seeking outside authority for his behavior. He also acts individually; indeed, collective action rarely appears in Greek myth. Tinia, however, needs permission to act from other gods, known by the group names Consenting Gods, Shrouded Gods, or Secret Gods of Favor.
  - An interesting terra-cotta Etruscan plaque shows the gods in council. Remarkably, they are all making speaking gestures and all appear to be rational. That doesn't happen too often in other religions. In Greek and Near Eastern myth, the gods meet in council but rarely reach an agreement, or one god threatens and blusters and the others back down.

- This idea of consent became critical in the Roman world and seems to have been adopted from the Etruscans. Power, in both the family and government, was wielded only after consent had been given by other appropriate bodies, such as the other males in the family or the members of the Roman Senate.

Principal Etruscan Goddess: Uni

- Tinia's consort, Uni, was the principal goddess of the Etruscans. She has been equated with Juno and Hera, with some justification, but she has key differences from them. The Etruscans compared her to the fertility goddess Astarte or Ishtar, who seems a much better parallel than Hera or Juno. Astarte was a goddess of love and fertility, as well as a goddess of war.

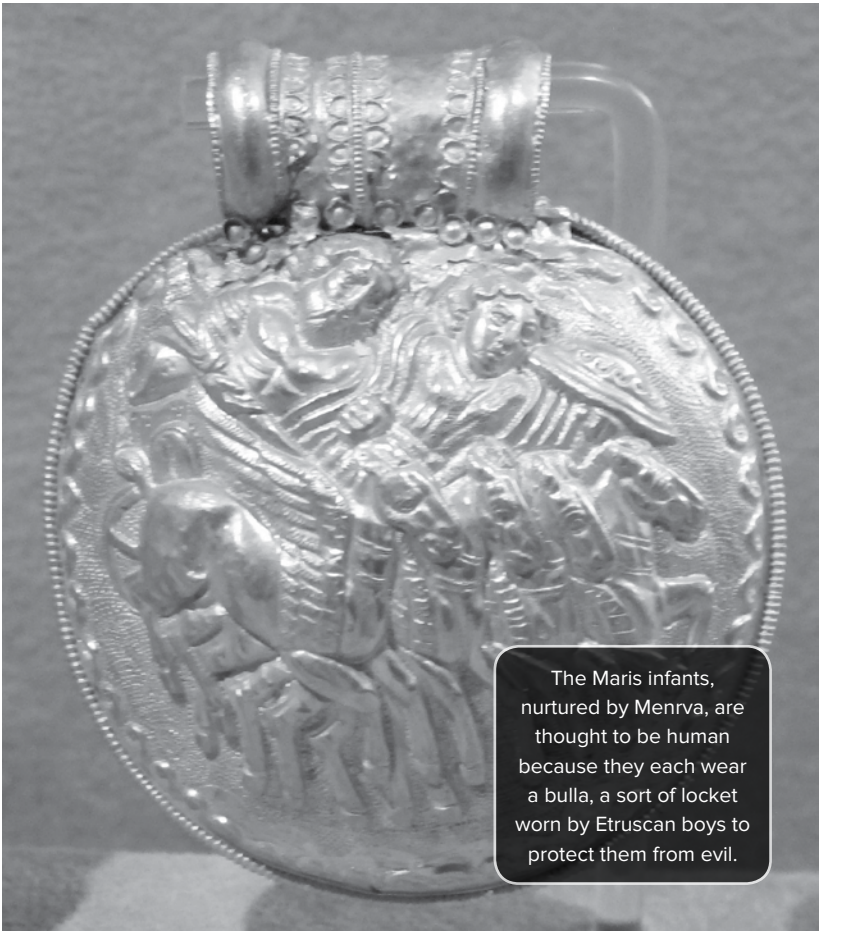
- Like Astarte but unlike Hera, Uni is associated with fertility, particularly with childbirth. Her largest known sanctuary was near Capua, the Etruscan colony in Campania, where thousands of terra-cotta and stone votive statues and statuettes of mothers and infants were excavated. Some of the most elaborate of these carved stone sculptures show the goddess seated on a throne, holding up to a dozen newborn infants on her lap.

- In Greek myth, the marriage of Zeus and Hera is marked by betrayal, jealousy, anger, occasional domestic violence, and rejection of the stepchildren. In contrast, Tinia and Uni seem the model couple, with a stable, peaceful, and mutually supportive relationship. Indeed, Uni can even wield the thunderbolt along with Tinia.
  - Their calm marriage and shared ability with the thunderbolt may reflect the Etruscan ideal husband-wife partnership. As we've mentioned, Etruscan women had a remarkable amount of freedom and parity with men compared to any other women we know of in antiquity.

  - These family and social qualities in the real world may have been given divine sanction by their occurrence in the principal divine marriage of the pantheon.

The Goddess Menrva

- The third most powerful and one of the most commonly illustrated and evoked Etruscan deities is Menrva. Her name developed into the Roman



The Maris infants, nurtured by Menrva, are thought to be human because they each wear a bulla, a sort of locket worn by Etruscan boys to protect them from evil.

Minerva, and she is associated with Athena in Greek culture. She differs from both of them, however, in a number of ways. Menrva is a powerful weather goddess, one of the nine wielders of the thunderbolt, and has sky associations, as indicated by her wings. She is also a goddess of war.

- Menrva's sanctuaries reveal that her cult was involved in healing. Along with Apollo (Etruscan: Aplu), she was a patron deity of prophecy. In

keeping with her complex identity, she also nurses and nurtures children. For example, she and Hercle both have a role in nurturing the child Epiur, either as foster parents, seeing that he was raised and brought into divine society, or as his actual parents.

- Tinia, Uni, and Menrva may be the most complex of all Etruscan deities, based on their spheres of influence from the sky to the underworld. Their cult statues have been found together in tripartite temples that dominated Etruscan cities, an indication of their importance in Etruscan belief.

The Goddess Turan

- The goddess Turan is probably the oldest of all Etruscan deities and represents the innate expectation of child-nurturing that seems embedded in each Etruscan goddess's nature or myths. Her name means "lady" with the connotation of "female ruler." She is sometimes equated with Venus, but she has more in common with the earliest Greek ideas of Aphrodite, who enjoyed powerful associations with procreative sexual love and with war.

- One indication of Turan's extreme age is her form, which is not fully anthropomorphized. She has wings, an attribute of some of the oldest of the Etruscan gods. We see the same pattern with Greek gods. Early images of Artemis, for example (also a pre-Greek deity), showed her with wings, but these eventually disappeared in favor of a fully human-formed goddess.

- Turan appears in a great deal of Etruscan art, especially domestic pieces, such as engraved bronze mirrors and vases. Her image on mirrors makes sense given her association with beauty. In many representations, she appears with various attendants, as well as male figures, including her lovers Atuns and Hercle. In works of art prior to the 4th century B.C., she is elaborately dressed, coiffed, and bejeweled. In 3rd-century-B.C. depictions, she is often nude except for her high Etruscan-style boots.

- Like the other major goddesses in the Etruscan pantheon, Turan cares for infants and small children. This consistent notion of goddesses as nurturers, no matter what their other attributes or personal strengths, seems to suggest an Etruscan belief that mothering is inherent in

all women or an expectation that all women should be involved in childrearing.

The Etruscan National God

- The figure that some modern scholars refer to as the Etruscan national god has a number of names—Veltha, Veltune, Vortumnus, Vertumnus, and Voltumna—a fact that splendidly indicates his indefinite or ill-defined nature. He was a deity of vegetation, the changing seasons, and the rhythms of the natural world. Extended passages in the work of the Roman poets Ovid and Propertius take Vortumnus as their subject and give us quite a bit of information about his abilities and attributes. Propertius and Ovid both mention that the god's gender can be fluid and point to his connections with crops in the field, orchards, and gardens.

- Propertius wrote a poem in which he gave Vortumnus a voice to speak, defining his own nature: "Why marvel at the many shapes of my one body? My nature is adaptable to every form: Turn me into whatever you wish." He goes on to list his possible identities: noble, soldier, reaper, hunter, shepherd, and more. It's fitting for a god who was probably worshipped without human form for hundreds of years to not be tied to any specific form or identity.

- The contention that Vortumnus was the Etruscan national god has great support. His shrine, the Fanum Voltumnae, was the most important shrine or sanctuary in the Etruscan world. Located outside the Etruscan city of Volsinii (modern Orvieto), it was the central gathering place for the religious, political, and military authorities from the 12 Etruscan cities that made up the Etruscan League. The presence of this sanctuary may explain why the Romans sacked Volsinii in 264 B.C. and took the remarkable step of resettling its inhabitants elsewhere.

- The important lesson we can draw from Vortumnus is that Etruscans worshipped spirits that were manifestations of the divine whose forms and identities could—and did—change. Nevertheless, they were recognizable in whatever forms they took, and their propitiation was critical to the continued success of individual and collective Etruscan activities.

Suggested Reading

de Grummond and Simon, eds., *The Religion of the Etruscans*.

Jannot (Whitehead, trans.), *Religion in Ancient Etruria*.

Questions to Consider

1. In what ways might the Etruscan notion that the divine must agree collectively concerning violence be reflected in their society?
2. What do you make of the apparent ubiquitous aspect of child-nurturing among all female and some male deities? What does it reveal about Etruscan cultural needs?

Lecture 8

Divination: The Will of the Gods

Without question, the practice of divination originated with the Etruscans. It was later adopted by the Romans and had a profound effect on Roman history. At least three of Rome's seven kings were selected through divination, and every major public event in Rome had to be approved in advance by the gods, who let their will be known through various signs. Divination was also one of the longest-lasting Etruscan legacies. The last known consultation of priests trained in divination was in 405 A.D., and there's evidence that the Etruscans' methods were preserved down to about 600 A.D. In this lecture, we'll look in detail at this ancient and intriguing practice by which the will of the gods was determined.

The Origins of Divination

- The Etruscan view of the divine seems to have largely been that of powerful spiritual beings—gods and lesser spirits, such as nymphs and demons—who oversaw every human activity and ranged in their attitude toward humans from the relatively benign (gods) to the uncaring (nymphs) to the hostile (demons). All of these beings required not only propitiation but that their will be determined, interpreted, and adhered to.

- For the Etruscans, natural phenomena, such as lightning, occurred to give humans the opportunity to learn the will of the gods. According to an ancient story, the knowledge necessary to identify and interpret these signs was given to the Etruscans by Tages, an infant who emerged from the ground when an Etruscan named Tarchon was plowing his field outside the city of Tarquinia.
  - When the infant appeared, all the people of Etruria (perhaps residents of all 12 Etruscan communities) gathered at the spot. Tages began to speak, giving instructions on divination, and his words were recorded.

- Having passed along to all Etruscans the methods of determining the future, Tages then disappeared. Tarchon became the first *haruspex*, or priest trained in the art of divination by inspection of entrails. He is recognizable in art by having his toga pulled up to cover his head, a sign of someone performing a religious ritual in both Etruscan and Roman art.

- Intriguingly, results from relatively recent excavations at Tarquinia reported the discovery of a religious precinct from the 9th century B.C. that contained a large cavity or sinkhole in the earth with an altar and channel to direct liquids from sacrifices into the cavity. This was nearby the burial of an epileptic albino boy, who may have been a substitute for Tages.

The Practice of Divination

- There were five major types of divination: examination of entrails, flights of birds, portents (such as lightning), oracles, and dreams. The Etruscans specialized in the first three. Let's look first at birds and portents, both of which share a common process.

- In each case, the priest (*augur*) had to be outdoors in a walled but open precinct (*auguraculum*). He would stand in the precinct and take the auspices. To understand how this worked, we need to note that the Etruscans divided the cosmos into 16 segments, much like cutting a pie into slices. Each segment was the province of a particular god, and the augur needed to note which one was the origin spot or terminal spot for a particular portent.
  - As you might expect, the segments were organized in a very prescriptive way. The hostile part of the cosmos was the west, traditionally the land of the dead or the underworld. The north was the most powerful direction because it was overseen by Usil, the sun god. The northeast quadrant was the one of greatest good fortune, while the northwest was the region of the most dire portents.

  - Each of these 16 segments was further subdivided into 3; again, most of these were the precincts of different gods, but some were

overseen by different aspects of the major gods. For example, Tinia had both positive, helpful aspects and destructive ones.

- As flights of birds moved among these segments, the augurs would note their direction, as well as the segments in which the birds first appeared and in which they disappeared from view. These were the critical ones to understand the will of the gods.

- The process was similar with other portents, the most important of which was lightning, sent by Tinia. The interpretation of portents made a significant impact on the direction of the state, not just on individual lives. For example, Livy tells us that when Romulus and Remus debated which of them should be king, they turned to the augurs, who examined flights of birds for the answer. When a crack opened in the floor of the Roman Forum—a portent of threat to the state—augurs told the Romans how to mitigate the threat.

- The calendar also played a role in the context of portents. The earliest Etruscan calendar we know had only 10 months. Later, in the 5th century B.C., a 12- month calendar was adopted. In each version of the calendar, the month and the day of the month were critical to the meaning of the divination. For example, thunder heard on June 2 meant that women in labor would have easy deliveries, while thunder heard on June 16 meant war and the disappearance of a prosperous man from public life.

Training in Divination

- Because of the complexity of divination and the importance it held for the community, training in the art was a long and arduous process. This training seems to have begun in boyhood and continued throughout the lifetime of Etruscan and Roman priests.

- In addition to practical training, students used the books of the *Etruscan Discipline*, of which there were three: one on interpreting lightning, one on reading entrails, and a third on general rituals. It's almost certain that the priests-in-training memorized these books. None of these Etruscan books survives, but we have detailed accounts of them from ancient

authors. We also have two important religious texts that are the longest-surviving Etruscan written works.

- One is a ritual calendar with references to specific cults and cult activities that was found in the remains of a sacred building in a necropolis outside the walls of Capua. It dates to the late 6th or early 5th century B.C.

- The second is an extraordinary preservation because it's a religious text written on linen. It survived only because at some point, the linen was torn into strips and used to wrap a mummy. In 1862, that mummy was donated to a museum in Zagreb, and the bandages were removed. Eventually, the writing was identified as Etruscan and, although fragmentary, studied as the only preserved book on general rituals.

Reading Entrails

- The haruspices, the priests who interpreted signs from the entrails of sacrificial animals, had their own book, and we know much of their process, as well.

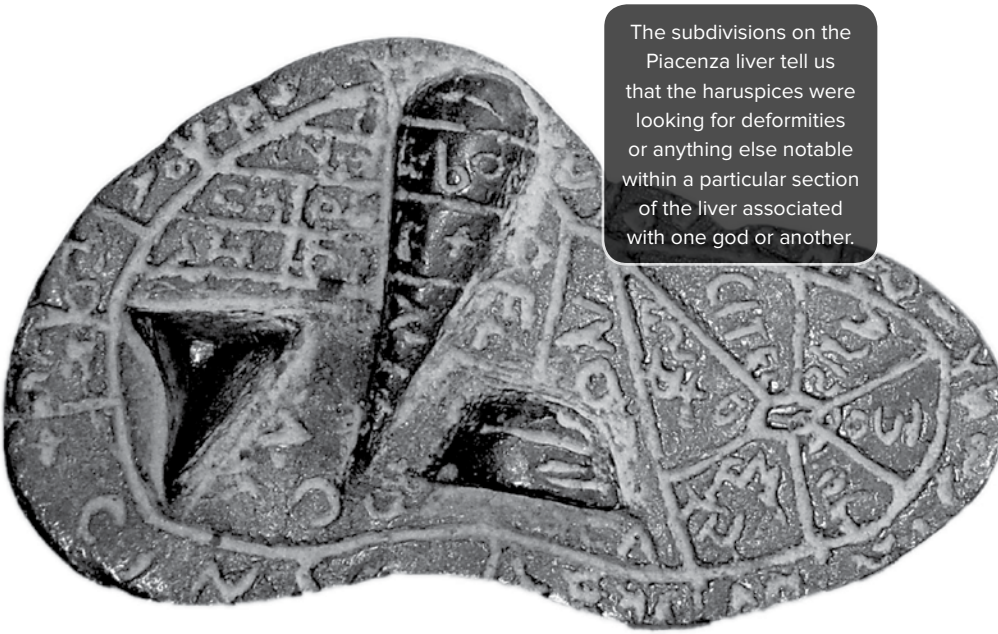
- Prior to any sacrifice that he would be called to examine, the haruspex had to fast for anywhere from 12 hours to 3 days. On the day of the sacrifice, he had to ritually purify himself, wear clean clothing, and present himself to the sacrifice.

- There, accompanied by prayers and music, assistants to the priests would dispatch the sacrificial animals, usually stunning them with a blow to the head, then slitting their throats. This method allowed them to collect the blood that gushed out and present it for inspection and offering by the priests themselves. Once the animal was dead, its body would be opened and the viscera removed by the assistants and handed to the haruspex, who would examine them for signs from the gods.

- Generally, the entrails provided signs of the acceptability of a sacrifice. Sometimes, certain internal organs would be missing, and that or any sort of defective animal meant a failed sacrifice, the displeasure of the god

or gods, and the need to repeat the offering until a positive result was achieved.

- In addition to the book on reading entrails, haruspices also had models to use in their training. This fact is attested by a life-size bronze model of a sheep's liver discovered in 1877 near Piacenza. The model reproduces the shape and structure of the liver and includes the associated gallbladder, inferior vena cava, and caudate lobe. Interestingly, it is also subdivided along the edge into 16 areas, each of which conforms to one of the segments of the cosmos and the associated deities.
  - The subdivisions seem to reflect the same view of the cosmos as we saw earlier with augury, giving us a rare glimpse into Etruscan thinking about the world and why the Etruscans were so fervent about seeking omens and portents.


The subdivisions on the Piacenza liver tell us that the haruspices were looking for deformities or anything else notable within a particular section of the liver associated with one god or another.

- As mentioned earlier, they viewed parts of the world as a reflection of the whole, with the cosmos as a repeating pattern that could be seen at large or small scale. This fractal view of the universe was an insight that came about only after the discovery of the liver.

Summing Up Divination

- On the surface, divination may seem like a quaint and curious Etruscan custom. But in fact, it's a practice that seems to have resonated not only with the Etruscans but also with the cultures who came into contact with them. Although the Etruscans were absorbed into the Roman sphere of control by the 2nd century B.C., their methods of divination continued to play a role in private and public functions until the 5th century A.D., surviving even an edict by the first Christian emperor, Constantine, that tried to suppress them.

- The practice of Etruscan divination also provides us with one of our best pieces of evidence from antiquity of the almost incredible levels of uncertainty and insecurity that permeated the ancient world. For example, given a lack of understanding of the scientific bases of geology, volcanology, or meteorology, the world must have seemed mysterious and dominated by gods and spirits who were potentially hostile. Divination provided answers and an element of control that must have led to at least some comfort. Perhaps that explains its tremendous popularity.

Suggested Reading

Turfa, *Divining the Etruscan World.*

van der Meer, *Etrusco Ritu: Case Studies in Etruscan Ritual Behaviour*.

———, *Liber Linteus Zagrabiensis: The Linen Book of Zagreb*.

———, *The Bronze Liver of Piacenza*.

Questions to Consider

1. What's the purpose of the stories of divination that come down to us? What lessons are we to learn from them?
2. How would divination tend to become a self-fulfilling ritual?

Lecture 9

Sanctuaries and Sacred Places

In the previous lecture, we examined the Etruscan practice of divination. The worldview and cultural priorities that led to the development of that practice also contributed to the number, form, scale, and orientation of Etruscan sanctuaries. Although we commonly focus on temples as sacred buildings, sanctuaries are the spaces in which temples are built and, in addition to the temple, include facilities for religious rites, offerings, banquets, prayers, oracles, and processional rituals. As in other cultures, sanctuaries served the Etruscans in creating exclusive and visible spaces and architectural settings for formal religious practice. The placement, orientation, and architectural articulation of sanctuaries are worth examining because they have meanings that reflect underlying religious beliefs.

Purposes of Sanctuaries

- Sanctuaries served a number of purposes for their founders. First, they operated as liminal spaces, that is, entrance or exit points where Etruscan and non-Etruscan people could interact. This purpose shaped the form of sanctuaries, providing spaces for cultural, religious, economic, and diplomatic exchanges. Sanctuaries also reflected changes in social structures. Many sanctuaries were built in the late 6th century when local Etruscan rulers—conventionally called *tyrants* after the Greek term—used these foundations to help break the power of the aristocracies.
  - A superb example of the realization of these purposes is Pyrgi, the sanctuary of Cerveteri. Built on the coast just south of the harbor, it includes several temples, all of which face the sea. The sanctuary serves as a liminal space between Etruscans and those who visited them by sea, notably the Phoenicians and Greeks.

  - That the sanctuary was designed for cultural exchange is proven by a breathtaking find: a set of three gold plaques originally designed to be nailed to the main door of one of the temples. The plaques are

inscribed in two languages, Etruscan and Phoenician, and document the cult of Uni/Astarte. The goddess is referred to by both her Etruscan and Phoenician names, indicating that both cultures were significant audiences for this sanctuary.

- Pyrgi might have also served a diplomatic role. Based on the number of guest quarters, archaeologists conclude that Phoenicians came to stay there, perhaps while negotiating with their Etruscan allies. The founder of the sanctuary was Thefarie Velianas of Cerveteri, thought to be one of those tyrants who rose to power in the general social and political shift that put an end to aristocratic rule in about 500 B.C. Establishing the worship of Uni/Astarte at Pyrgi was probably a component of his public works program, as well as a statement of religious support. This overt political use of sanctuaries was not unique to him.

- Sanctuaries also served to define individual communities and, therefore, act as a focus of competition between them. We can see this in the locations of temples built on the edge of communities to define the extent of territorial claims. An Etruscan phrase found in their inscriptions describes such sanctuaries as *tular rasnal*, "limits of the city-state."
  - As another factor in this competition, we also see a sort of "arms race" in temple size and decoration. Temples became larger in some community sanctuaries, particularly those on the edges of Etruscan territory. The sanctuary of Mephitis at Pompeii, built on a terrace overlooking its harbor on the coast, and the Forum Boarium sanctuaries at Rome, overlooking the cattle market and Tiber harbor, are examples of this sort of placement.

  - The Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, begun by the last Etruscan king of Rome, demonstrates the tremendous size of some temples used to define Etruscan communities. It measured 220 feet by 180 feet, 80 percent of the area of a football field.

- The decoration of sanctuaries, especially temples, served to define communities culturally in a form of inter-community dialogue based on either connections to other communities or deliberate contrasts.

- For example, a number of central Italian temples of the 5th century B.C. were decorated with terra-cotta statue groups of Menrva/Athena guiding Hercules to his apotheosis. The wealthy patrons of these buildings used the image as a metaphor for the divine guidance they claimed. Such decorations seem to have been an outlet for wealthy elites of the period to communicate and connect with one another.

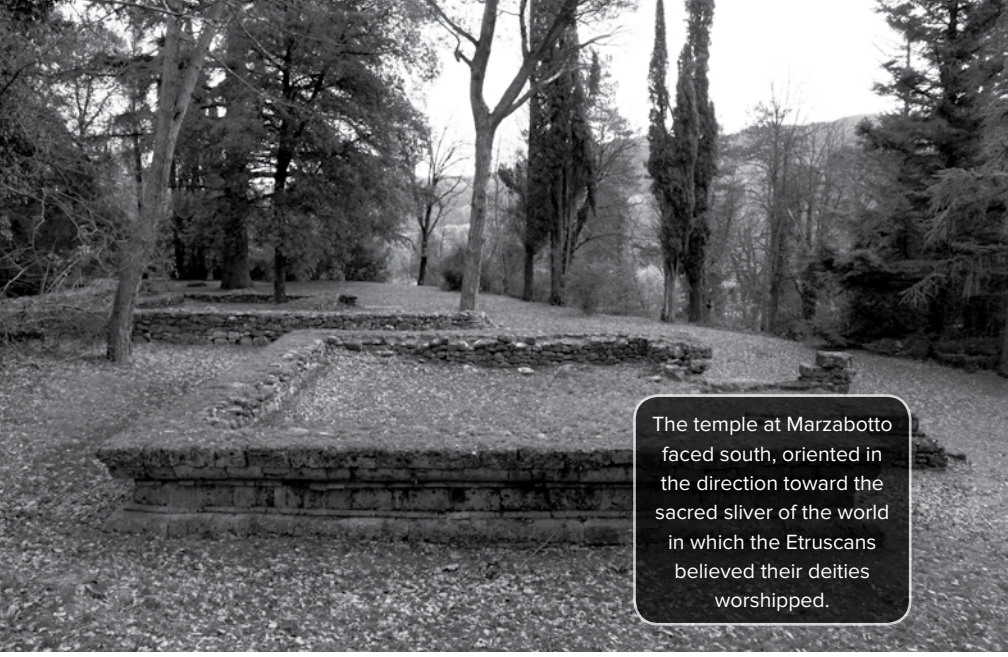
- By contrast, the Greek sanctuary of Hera on the banks of the Sele River in southern Italy, just across from Etruscan territory, was decorated with images from Greek myth of individuals and groups who threatened the Greeks and were all killed. Clearly, this message was directed at the Greeks' Etruscan neighbors just across the river. The Etruscans themselves created decorations to project similar messages.

Sanctuary Locations and Layout

- Before the 6th-century-B.C. building boom, the decision to found a sanctuary seems to have been based on the presumed sacredness of a particular location. Early Etruscan sanctuaries are found on hilltops, near caves, and on the shores of lakes. This prioritizing of physical geography was only one factor in the sanctuaries of about 500 B.C., which were walled rather than being integrated with the landscape, marking a clear division between sacred and secular.

- In addition to the boundary wall, all sanctuaries contained a basic architectural assemblage of at least one temple, an outdoor altar, a source of water, and dedications. These served to spatially and architecturally fix ritual. Note that all major rituals, including all forms of divination, sacrifice, and procession, occurred outdoors. Thus, the critical decoration in each sanctuary was also outdoors, on the exterior of temples, for example, rather than the interior.

- Many sanctuaries had multiple temples, often built adjacent to each other on the same orientation so that they faced a specific, privileged direction, such as the sea or the city gates. Other orientations may be have been chosen to reflect the Etruscan view of the cosmos and the precincts of specific gods.



The temple at Marzabotto faced south, oriented in the direction toward the sacred sliver of the world in which the Etruscans believed their deities worshipped.

Temple Structure

- Etruscan temples shared three major design priorities: centrality, axiality, and frontality. They were much smaller than Greek temples. In addition, the Greek temple was raised on a three-step platform, while the Etruscan-styled one had a tall podium. This difference in height led directly to the emphasis on frontality in Etruscan temples.
  - The height of the podium changed the relationship of the temple to the viewer; the Greek temple was accessible from all sides, while the Etruscan one was strictly frontal and forced anyone approaching to do so from one direction. Probably as a result of this frontality, Etruscan temples were more often found on hills, projecting the religious and cultural identity of the community outward.

  - The centrality of Etruscan temples was emphasized by the fact that the steps did not span the width of the podium but generally only the center third of it, channeling the person approaching toward the central doorway at the top. The key to an Etruscan temple was not size, apparently, but proportions.

- The tripartite *cella* has been traced back as far as the 7th-century-B.C. phase at Murlo and could be referred to as the quintessential Etruscan architectural unit for both religious and domestic spaces. Excellent examples of the three-*cella* temple include the Belvedere Temple at Orvieto (5th century B.C.) and the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus at Rome (509 B.C.).

Temple Decoration

- Temple construction out of perishable materials, such as timber, had a great influence on both building form and decoration. Perishable materials demanded broad roofs to direct water away from timber structures and mud walls. In addition, all the exposed timber elements were covered with terra-cotta to preserve them from weather. The massive use of terra-cotta decoration on early Etruscan temples was a hallmark of their form and allowed the lavish decoration of the entire structure.

- The most ubiquitous decorative elements in Etruscan temples were terra-cotta plaques. These slabs of either carved or molded clay were painted and fired, then nailed to the edges of the roof along the front and back pediments and around the sides of the temple. Instead of conveying a narrative, the plaques generally showed generic, idealized images of elite ceremonial experiences, such as horseraces, banquets, processions, and assemblies.

- Antefixes and pediments provided the only frontality in Etruscan temple decoration. Antefixes almost always took the form of disembodied heads of monstrous figures staring out from their terra-cotta reliefs. Like *protomes*, the heads carved on city gates, they were apotropaic in nature, that is, designed to keep evil from entering the space. Pediments, in contrast, were the only spot for narrative in the decoration and were frequently presented as action shots of myths. For example, Temple B from Pyrgi had a pediment decorated with three terra-cotta panels of about 520 B.C., each with a scene from the myths of Hercle.

- Superb examples of ridgeline sculptures were found at the Portonaccio sanctuary at Veii, a southern Etruscan city 10 miles north of Rome. The

ridgeline of the Temple of Aplu was decorated with at least four over-life-size statues of deities: Turms, Hercle, Aplu, and Letua. These were non-narrative profile figures that did not engage anyone approaching the temple, in contrast to the Hercules/Athena pairs from the Forum Boarium and other temples.

- The Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus provides our best surviving example of the full range of temple decoration. In addition to its appearance in art, the temple is mentioned frequently in ancient literary sources, and those descriptions are useful for reconstructing and understanding this temple and categorizing the full range of decorative and subsidiary materials that would fill an Etruscan sanctuary.
  - The missing sculptural program of the temple is described by various sources. The cult statue of Jupiter was clothed with a tunic adorned with palm branches (*tunica palmata*) and a purple toga embroidered with gold, a ritual costume introduced from northern Etruria.

  - The superstructure of the temple was of wood, and on the apex of the pediment was a terra-cotta group showing Jupiter in a *quadriga* by Vulca of Veii, an Etruscan artist.

  - Sometime early in the 2nd century B.C., a mosaic pavement was laid in the *cella* of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, and in 142 B.C., the ceiling was gilded. The temple became a repository of works of art and victory trophies from Roman generals and others.

- From their layout to their decoration and the remains of ritual activity, Etruscan sanctuaries open a door that lets us see Etruscan world structure, belief systems, religious priorities, and ritual requirements.

Suggested Reading

Boethius, *Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture*.

Gleba and Becker, eds., *Votives, Places and Rituals in Etruscan Religion*.

Izzet, "Tuscan Order."

Questions to Consider

1. In what ways do Etruscan sanctuaries operate to define communities, regions, or Etruscan territory as a whole?
2. As an outsider, what would you see in the decoration of sanctuaries that was directed at you and what did it hope to teach you about Etruscan attitudes toward you?

Lecture 10

Etruscan Myths, Legends, and Heroes

Etruscan heroes performed the usual heroic legendary deeds of founding cities, killing monsters and evil men, and defending the helpless, sometimes accompanied by a sidekick. Remarkably, however, many of their heroes and the stories around them seem to be based on historical figures and events. The Etruscan mythologized their early champions into defenders of all of Etruria. Some myths are also versions of the stories of early Rome told from the Etruscan point of view. In this lecture, we'll look at the stories of Tages and Tarchon, the prophetess Lasa Vecuvia, and the brothers Avle and Caile Vipinas.

The Story of Tages

- As mentioned in an earlier lecture, Tages was the source for Etruscan knowledge of divination and religious ritual. In the story, a man—in some versions, Tarchon, the founder of Tarquinia—is out plowing when an infant pops out of a deep furrow. This infant has some features of an old man, such as wrinkles, teeth, and a bald head. When he begins to speak, Tarchon cries out and the tribes of Etruria gather. Tages then dictates the divination practices and religious rituals before disappearing, dying, or being carried home by Tarchon. Thanks to Tages, Tarchon becomes a priest, then a king.

- The fact that Tarchon was plowing suggests that the story takes place in a time before social stratification in ancient Etruria. The Roman tale of Cincinnatus plowing his own field before being named dictator by the Senate carries the same message of greatness being unconnected to wealth. The tale could also be designed to validate the rule of Tarchon over the city, owing to his mysterious knowledge of religion, based on adherence to the ritual requirements of the Etruscan gods.
  - This tells us something about Etruscan notions of kingship and the importance of the king's role as a priest in defining his worth for the

position. Certainly, the kings of Athens claimed descent from a figure who came out of the ground on the Athenian acropolis, Erichthonius.

- The idea of religious wisdom coming out of the ground is unusual and significant. Most religious revelations in ancient myth come from the sky or are conveyed by someone who took them from the sky. Here, the fact that Tages is literally grounded implies a deep connection between the Etruscans and their land. The place itself has a role in their cultural identity. Other peoples claimed to have been created from the ground of a place, but the Etruscans are unique in connecting their rituals, not themselves, to the ground.

- The form that Tages took as an old man/newborn incorporates age and wisdom, as well as youth and innocence. Present at the beginning of Etruscan religion, his youth reflects that initial stage (newborn child and newborn religion), while his age shows, perhaps, the cycle that was present in all Etruscan belief.

Lasa Vecuvia

- The female prophet Lasa Vecuvia represents that curiously Etruscan form of equality (or, at least, symmetry) of paired male and female figures. *Lasa* is an Etruscan word that is better thought of as a title than a name and might best be translated as "Spirit." It is borne by a number of winged female figures found associated with gods in Etruscan myth.

- Lasa revealed her prophecies to Arruns Veltymnus, an Etruscan from Chiusi, and they were recorded in about 90 B.C. by the Etruscan haruspex Tarquitius. A section of the prophecy reads:

  > When Jupiter claimed the land of Etruria for himself, he decided and commanded the fields to be surveyed and the lands marked out. Knowing the covetousness of man and his worldly greed, he wanted the boundaries of everything to be marked by boundary stones. … But if anyone touches or moves a boundary stone, extending his own possessions or diminishing those of someone else, for this crime he will be condemned by the gods.

- As you might imagine, scholars connect this prophesy with Roman attacks on Etruria and claim that it's a threat by the Etruscans of divine wrath upon the Romans who seized their land in the 4th through 2nd centuries B.C.

Avle and Caile Vipinas

- Among the Etruscan heroes said to have stood up to the Romans were the brothers Avle and Caile Vipinas, referred to in Latin as Aulus and Caelius Vivenna. Some of their adventures were related by the Roman emperor Claudius in a speech before the Senate, in which he argued that citizenship should be extended to the Gauls.
  - Caile Vipinas was Claudius's primary evidence for the argument that non-Romans contributed to the state and should be fully a part of it by being granted citizenship. He tells the story of how Caile came to the aid of Servius Tullius, the Etruscan former slave who Tanaquil prophesized should become king.

  - Caile brought an army down from Etruria to support Servius (Etruscan: Mastarna), and after they succeeded in securing his rule, they settled on one of the Seven Hills of Rome, thereafter known as the Caelian. The Roman historian Tacitus tells a version of the same story.

- Both Caile and Avle are also credited with aiding the final king of Rome, Tarquinius Superbus, in some vague way. A sign of just how heroic they are is the garbled chronology that surrounds them. Another tradition related by the Roman grammarian Varro has Caile and Avle fighting on the side of Romulus against the Sabine king Titus Tatius. This would make them about 250 years old by the time of Tarquinius Superbus.

- According to a brief mention in one source, Avle was one of the kings of Rome, and a convoluted tradition related by late authors says that the Capitoline Hill itself was named for him.
  - According to the 3rd-century-A.D. Christian author Arnobius, Avle was beheaded by his brother's slave because of a crime against his fellow citizens and was, therefore, denied burial in Etruria. Alve's head was buried at the top of the hill to ensure the fulfillment of the omen of the gods that Rome would rule the world. And when the foundations for the temple of Jupiter were laid out, a human head

rolled out. The name Capitoline is a corruption of Caput Auli (Latin for "head of Avle or of Aulus").

- This story reinforces the Etruscan relationship to the Temple of Jupiter, apparently built on this spot partially to fulfill an omen—itself a very Etruscan notion. It's also noteworthy that this is one of a number of Etruscan traditions of heads coming out of the ground to tell or fulfill omens. Images in Etruscan art show gods and men with heads popping out of the ground under their feet. Apparently, Avle fulfilled that role in death.

- A late-4th-century-B.C. tomb excavated outside the Etruscan city of Vulci has an extraordinary series of interior wall paintings that depict Caile, Avle, and other men escaping from some enemies who had captured them. Interestingly, the figures in the painting are named, and the cities from which the enemies originated are identified. It's likely that these frescoes preserve the only visual record of a dramatic event (fictional or not) in the historical struggle against the sons of Tarquinius Priscus to put Servius Tullius on the throne in Rome.

- One additional story of the adventures of Avle and Caile seems to have historical roots. It is illustrated on an engraved bronze mirror and a series of urns from Chiusi. A seer named Cacu is shown prophesizing, assisted by a young man, Artile, who sits by prepared to record the prophecy. They are about to be seized by Avle and Caile Vipinas.
  - Some scholars believe that Avle and Caile had been pursuing Artile and had finally caught up with him as he was consulting the seer Cacu, but others believe that they may have been sent by Tarchon to capture Cacu, an envoy from the king of the Marsi in Phrygia.

  - Why Tarchon wanted Cacu held is never recorded, but there are a number of stories in both Greek and Roman myth in which prominent men hold seers or prophets captive to learn their own futures. It's also possible that Tarchon had a more dire fate than captivity in mind for Cacu. Some versions of the scene are flanked by Vanths, figures generally present at death to escort the souls of the deceased into the underworld.

- What's notable in this second interpretation is that the Vipinas brothers are working for Tarchon of Tarquinia. That creates another connection between them and the Tarquinii and adds another Etruscan city to the list of those they are connected to. In this, they come even closer to the Hercules level of national heroism.

- We also have evidence that the Vipinas brothers were once both real men.
  - Although they were thought to have come from Vulci, a cinerary urn inscribed with the name Arnth Caule Vipina was excavated from a necropolis outside the walls of Chiusi. From a sanctuary at Veii, excavators found an Etruscan vessel dated to the period 600–550 B.C. and inscribed, "Avle Vipinas dedicated me."

  - In addition to this material from Chiusi and Veii, evidence of the stories is found at Rome, Vulci, Tarquinia, and Bolsena. It seems that the Etruscans as a people embellished stories from the lives of historic Etruscans into heroic nationalistic myths with themes of Etruscans fighting on behalf of other Etruscans against, among other enemies, the Romans.

The Hippocampus

- In an earlier lecture, we saw images of men standing on the seaside confronting a form of sea monster called the hippocampus, which always seems to be hovering above the waves facing them. As mentioned, some scholars argue that this sort of gigantic sea horse had to be confronted, overcome in battle, and ridden to the afterlife on an island.

- Other scholars, however, have suggested that the images of men fighting the hippocampi may be the only surviving imagery of otherwise lost Etruscan legends of heroes battling (and defeating) these monsters.

- The idea here is that this motif is isolated from any accompanying myth because it serves as a mythological metaphor. In this case, the myth is read as a personified metaphor for heroic Etruscans on the shore holding back an onslaught from the sea. The hippocampus, in this interpretation, stands for the Greek fleet, threatening Etruscan lands. The exclusive use

of this motif in tombs suggests that the deceased fulfilled the same role in life, perhaps as a soldier in an Etruscan army.

Suggested Reading

de Grummond, *Etruscan Myth, Sacred History, and Legend*.

Questions to Consider

1. How do the Vipinas brothers operate as the Etruscan version of patriotic heroes? Do their myths reinforce the Etruscan concepts of lack of heroic individuality and autonomy in their stories?
2. What do you make of the different myths that have the brothers fighting for and against the Etruscan rulers of Rome? What about fighting in periods 250 years apart?

Lecture
11

Greek Myth: Etruscan Tombs and Temples

In addition to their own gods and heroes, the Etruscans rapidly and thoroughly adopted Greek ones, as well. Although fighting against the Greeks for control of central and southern Italy, the Etruscans used Greek myths to communicate social values both to their enemies and among themselves. Examples on temples and tombs show the extent and meaning of Greek myths in their most sacred contexts.

Etruscan Adoption of Greek Myth

- We don't know why the Etruscans adopted Greek myth so readily over the course of what seems to have been just a few decades. Some

Depictions of the chimera from the Greek myth of Bellerophon can be found on Etruscan storage jars and amphorae, jewelry, mirrors, tomb paintings, and votive sculptures.

scholars speculate that the Etruscans embraced Greek culture because they considered it higher culture, but others argue the opposite: that Greek myth was adopted because of its popularity. The stories were widely known and didn't have to be reiterated with each use. That key quality meant that the Etruscans could use Greek myths to convey their own ideas about gods, heroes, values, and behavior in ways that would communicate to audiences around the central Mediterranean.

- Although we don't know why Etruscans adopted Greek myth, we have no doubt that they were heavily exposed to it. Beginning in the 7th century B.C., the Etruscans were swamped with Greek imports, particularly pottery, showing images from Greek stories.
  - The myth of the Greek hero Bellerophon, his steed Pegasus, and their battle with the monstrous chimera serves as a case study in the penetration of Greek myth through Etruria.

  - This episode of a Greek myth had enough resonance that it endured in Etruscan art in a range of media and contexts—from jewelry to tableware to wall painting—for as long as 500 years.

- It's important to note that a simple dichotomy of Greek or Etruscan myth is not always accurate. In fact, one of the intriguing aspects of studying Greek myth as used by the Etruscans is examining their myth selections and the changes they made to Greek versions.
  - For example, a scene from a series of cinerary urns from Chiusi is often identified as the Greek myth of Echetlos, a hero of the Battle of Marathon (490 B.C.) who slaughtered Persian enemies with his plow.

  - What's notable in the 2nd-century-B.C. urns is that the opponents of Echetlos are all dressed and/or armed and armored as Greeks, not Persians. Here, the Greeks have become the enemies slaughtered by the plow-wielding hero for the Etruscan audience. That variation tells us what the scene may have meant to the Etruscans: not an episode from the Battle of Marathon but an exemplar of a man defending his country against Greek invaders.

- We should also note that art in many ancient societies and contexts served to exert a *socially normative* influence. That is, it was designed to be viewed by members of society whose behavior would then conform to societal norms based—at least in part—on that influence. It may be that many of the Greek myths selected by the Etruscans for tomb and temple decoration were designed to serve a socially normative function.

Achilles's Ambush of Troilus

- Scenes from the Trojan War are among the most popular images of Greek myth in Etruscan and Roman art. Just one example is the central panel of the main wall in the Tomb of the Bulls from Tarquinia (c. 560 B.C.); this panel shows a scene in which the Greek hero Achilles ambushes the mounted Trojan prince Troilus at a fountain and murders him.

- Troilus was one of the sons of King Priam and Queen Hecuba. As his name suggests (containing the root of the name *Troy*), he was symbolically tied to the city of Troy, and his identity and existence were connected to that of the city. On hearing of a prophecy that Troy would not fall if this young prince reached the age of 20, Achilles, encouraged by the goddess Athena, was determined to kill him early in the war.
  - Knowing that Troilus regularly left the city to water his horses at a fountain near the sanctuary of Apollo, Achilles hid nearby. He waited until Troilus and his sister Polyxena were off their guard, then attacked. Troilus leaped onto one of the horses, but Achilles dragged him off and killed him, thus ensuring that Troy would fall.

  - In some versions, the act of killing Troilus at the altar of Apollo causes Apollo to bring about Achilles's death in retribution for this act of impiety.

- This scene and the story it illustrates carry a number of lessons. We have examples of ideal behavior in Troilus and Polyxena (each performing gender-appropriate tasks), a cautionary tale against impiety with the impending death of Achilles, and general themes of the inevitability of death and inability to escape fate, both themes found throughout Etruscan art and belief.

Seven against Thebes

- The Seven against Thebes is a series of Greek myths concerning the aftermath of Oedipus's blinding and the death of his mother/wife. Because he could no longer be king, Oedipus left his sons Eteocles and Polynices the throne of Thebes to be shared between them. The sons agreed to rule in alternate years, with Eteocles first, but after his year was over, Eteocles refused to step down.

- In some versions, Oedipus cursed the brothers for impiety and declared that as punishment they would die at each other's hand. In every version, the result was the Seven against Thebes, a civil war named for the Greek commanders Polynices rallied to his side to seize the city from his brother. They met on the battlefield and simultaneously stabbed each other to death. The story is illustrated on dozens of molded Etruscan cinerary urns. This mutual fratricide is also a prominent and graphic part of the wall paintings from the François Tomb at Vulci.

- The lesson here seems similar to that of the Troilus and Achilles story: to have a major instance of impiety punished. Both of the brothers refused to follow their father's wishes for them and the kingdom. In addition, there's a strong degree of hubris on the part of the brothers, who arrogantly rejected the shared rule dictated for them.

- In examples in both fresco and terra-cotta, the patrons or artists varied the scene of the simultaneous stabbing to more explicitly apply to Etruscans. At the François Tomb, the brothers are paired with images of two Etruscans locked in battle. On the urns, each brother has behind him Vanth, the Etruscan death demon, who reaches out with one hand to grab his soul at the moment of death and escort it to the afterlife.

Other Etruscan Adoptions and Uses

- By the late 4th century B.C., the use of myth in funerary contexts was fairly ubiquitous, and less obscure episodes were used regularly. In the Tomb of the Underworld at Tarquinia, for example, a blue-skinned Etruscan demon, Tuchulcha, torments with serpents the Greek hero Theseus, trapped in the underworld after his failed abduction of Persephone. Again, impiety and hubris punished are major themes.

- Another popular myth of the period has nothing to do with impiety or hubris but seems, instead, to be a cautionary tale against those who would threaten civilization. This is the Amazonomachy, the story of the Greeks versus the Amazons.
  - The myth became increasingly popular in both the Etruscan and Greek worlds in the 4th century B.C., evoking the close connections between the two.
  - Its popularity stemmed from the motif's ability to metaphorically represent enemies of the state or community thwarted—specifically, enemies whose very way of life was a rejection of civilized life.

- The Seven against Thebes provided lessons at temples, as well as tombs. Shortly after the disastrous Battle of Cumae in 474 B.C., the Etruscans built Temple A at the sanctuary of Pyrgi on the western coast of Italy. Despite the Etruscan loss to the Greeks, Greek myth is the preferred subject and artistic style for the largest decorative element of the temple: a large, high-relief terra-cotta plaque filling the pediment at the rear of the temple.
  - The pediment illustrates one of the most dramatic and disturbing scenes in the Greek myth of the Seven against Thebes: the duel between Tydeus and Melanippus.
  - In representing the scene—rarely found in Greek art but popular among the Etruscans—the artist has chosen the moment of climactic narrative rather than the more common Greek anticipatory narrative that would hint at the horror to come but not show it explicitly. Here, the horror and the message that the gods will punish acts of impiety are clear.
  - The pediment of Temple A at Pyrgi was replaced after an attack in 384 B.C. by one telling a different story. The figures in this myth, Ino and her son Melikertes, are both victims of the irrationality of the Greek gods, but they rise above that to achieve apotheosis into gods themselves in new forms. Perhaps that is the lesson of this art.

- Beginning in the 4th century B.C., we see dramatically increasing evidence of votive deposits at Etruscan sanctuaries. This is not to say that votives weren't dedicated earlier, but they now appear in more permanent materials, such as bronze and terra-cotta.
  - This could reflect increasing wealth, renewed devotion, or perhaps most likely, desperation among the Etruscans as their homelands came under attack by Roman forces and they appealed to the gods. Some of these votives name Greek gods as the objects of worship; others are images from Greek myth.

  - A superb example of the latter was discovered in 1553 with other votives outside the walls of Arezzo, one of the 12 cities of the Etruscan League. The votive, a masterpiece of Etruscan bronze work, is a four-foot-long sculpture of the chimera, a monstrous figure from the Greek myth of the hero Bellerophon, who fought it mounted on the winged horse Pegasus.

- Art from temple and tomb in the Etruscan world is saturated with images of Greek myth. Its popularity derived from a number of factors, including the ability to use the art to communicate metaphorically. The themes, subjects, and stories of Greek myth were used by the Etruscans to share lessons of their own cultural values and behavioral expectations.

Suggested Reading

Bonfante and Swaddling, *Etruscan Myths*.

van der Meer, *Myths and More*.

Questions to Consider

1. How do particular Greek myths serve socially normative functions in the Etruscan world? Are there limits to that function?
2. What can we see in the Etruscan worldview and the nature of Greek myth that might have increased the Etruscans' adoption of it?

Lecture
12

Greek Myth: Etruscan Homes

As with Greek myths in public spaces, the deities and heroes of the Greek canon also permeated Etruscan domestic space. As we explore the figures and stories found on household objects, notably thousands of bronze mirrors, we gain a sense of the interests of a largely female audience. As with the previous lecture on Greek myth in temples and tombs, however, our interest here is not just on the myths themselves or the domestic context. It's which Greek myths the Etruscans selected, in what contexts and on what objects they chose to display them, how they altered the myths to make them more Etruscan, and—perhaps most difficult of all—what these choices tell us about the Etruscans.

Etruscan Domestic Objects

- The Orientalizing phase in Etruscan art (700–600 B.C.) represents the earliest introduction of Greek subjects and Near Eastern influence into the art of the Italian peninsula. These subjects, materials, and styles were transmitted to the Etruscans who, because of their extensive trade networks, were a conduit for foreign influences into Italy, from alphabetic writing to Greek mythology.

- An ivory cylindrical box, called in Greek a *pyxis*, found in a grave in a necropolis at Chiusi, represents the Orientalizing trend toward detailed, small-scale decorative work on imported material. Unlike the Assyrian-inspired designs on other contemporary work, these designs and figures rely directly on Greek models and show an awareness of Greek literature, specifically Homer's *Odyssey*. The *pyxis* was created about 620 B.C., almost exactly 100 years after the *Odyssey* was written.

- The *pyxis* is divided into four long horizontal figural bands, called *registers*, separated by narrow bands of vine work derived from Corinthian painted pottery. In addition to figures of animals and monsters, types seen on

contemporary Corinthian pottery, two of the registers are filled with scenes from Homer's *Odyssey*, including the escapes from the Cyclops Polyphemus and the monster Scylla.

- The representations of the adventures of Odysseus and his men demonstrate the importance of Greek myth in Etruscan art as it will come to dominate the figural relief and painted work of Etruscan artists.

- The figural registers also exemplify the introduction of Greek narrative techniques into Etruscan art; the story is told by lines of figures divided by bands in an episodic narrative.

Etruscan Engraving

- In addition to hollow and solid cast bronzes, the Etruscans and central Italians were masters at engraving. This incised or engraved work probably transferred from the Etruscan jewelry industry. It moved from soft metals, such as gold, to harder metals, such as bronze, where the technique was used to create complex figural works of great sophistication, including complex engraved scenes on bronze hand mirrors.

- Mirrors were solid cast works in bronze that consisted of a round head with an attached handle, usually 10 to 12 inches long and 6 to 7 inches wide. The bronze handle was often inserted into one of bone or wood. The mirror head was highly polished on one side as a reflective surface, while the other was decorated, usually with an engraved scene. These mirrors were made from the 6th to the 1st centuries B.C. and have been found in many tombs. Their decorated backs reveal Etruscan adaptation of Greek myths and the use of these myths on the accessories that established elite female identity.

- Of the hundreds of examples of engraved domestic work that survive, the Ficoroni *cista* is easily one of the finest. Excavated at the town of Praeneste, about 21 miles east of Rome, it was one of 118 *cistae* (containers that held cosmetics, jewelry, and other items for female adornment) found in tombs there. The technical complexity of the form is surprising. In addition to shaping the round bronze container, it was

engraved, and solid cast feet and handles were made separately and attached to it.

- The inscription on the *cista* by its maker is rare and critical evidence of the high level of these forms made by artists at Rome in the Etruscan bronze industry in the 4th century B.C. It also shows the spread of Greek myths and the association of this form with Etruscan women.

- The exterior of the *cista* is covered with a detailed engraving of 19 figures in a fully realized landscape in a single scene that wraps around the entire vessel. The proportions, composition, and style of the figures exemplify knowledge of contemporary late classical Greek motifs and artistic conventions. The scene tells one episode in the story of the Argonauts, the heroes who accompanied Jason on the quest for the Golden Fleece.

- Another 4th-century-B.C. *cista*, found in a tomb at Praeneste, is interesting because it breaks the general pattern of using different myths for domestic objects and sacred spaces. This *cista* is engraved with yet another version of Achilles sacrificing his Trojan prisoners. The subject—blood sacrifice—raises the possibility that the *cista* was made to be placed in the tomb as a grave good. The scene also includes Etruscan elements not found in Homer's *Iliad*, including the presence of Athena (Menrva) overseeing the sacrifice and that of Vanth, the Etruscan underworld demon.

Popular Subjects

- The vast majority of Greek myth scenes on domestic items were more pleasant than the sacrifice of Trojan prisoners of war. In fact, the most popular is the Judgment of Paris—the event that can be said to have caused the Trojan War.
  - In this incident, Paris is chosen by Zeus to judge who is fairest, Athena, Aphrodite, or Hera. Aphrodite promises that if she is chosen, she will give Paris the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen. Fetching Helen from Greece and bringing her to his city, Troy, was the impetus for the Greek invasion and the 10-year war.

In Etruscan depictions of the Judgment of Paris, the figures are generally labeled with Etruscan names: Uni for Hera, Menrva for Athena, Turan for Aphrodite, and Elchsntre for Paris.

- The typical Etruscan representation shows Paris and the three goddesses, sometimes accompanied by Hermes, the messenger of the gods, who set up the contest. Paris is usually portrayed handing a golden apple to Aphrodite, indicating her victory, and she is often shown holding a mirror. That detail may suggest why this scene is so popular: It allows the owner of the mirror to associate herself with the goddess of love.

- Stories of love and romance are common in domestic art, especially on bronze mirrors. In fact, even the myths of Hercules have a romantic Etruscan variation, in which Hercle, the Etruscan version of Hercules, has a love affair with an Etruscan goddess named Mlacuch.
  - On one mirror, Hercle's bow and quiver of arrows lay discarded on the ground as he picks up Mlacuch. Unlike the episodes of Persephone and Hades, Mlacuch is not struggling against the hero. Hercle has symbolically laid aside his warlike nature with his weapons and taken up romance.

  - In addition to this rather uncharacteristic side to his personality, both Hercle and Menrva appear on mirrors caring for infants, usually the ambiguous semidivine figures named Maris, showing paternal and maternal qualities not found in the canonical Greek myths but apparently important to the Etruscans, especially in domestic contexts.

- Birth stories from Greek myth also make their appearance on Etruscan mirrors, typically in unusual, non-canonical forms.
  - For example, the Etruscans seem to have been fond of the account of Helen of Troy's birth: Zeus in the form of a swan seduced her mother, Leda, who laid an egg containing Helen rather than giving birth to a human infant.

  - Versions of this story are found on many mirrors, with all the principal figures labeled in Etruscan. Images of Helen's birth; Helen with the Trojan prince Paris (Elchsntre); Helen with Paris and her husband, Menelaus (Menle in Etruscan); or Helen with some combination along with the goddess of love, Turan, lead us to consider that the Judgment of Paris scenes weren't considered by the Etruscans as

images of the Trojan War but as one episode in the story of Helen. Her life seems to have been more popular on bronze mirrors than the Trojan War stories.

- Another significant Greek mythological birth, and the one illustrated most frequently in Etruscan domestic art, was the birth of Athena out of the head of Zeus. According to Greek mythology, she burst out of his head fully grown—in fact, armed and armored—the result of Zeus swallowing her pregnant mother, Metis, goddess of wisdom. In this way, Zeus gained wisdom and the experience of childbirth.

- Yet another popular subject for mirror engravers was the love affair of Turan and Atunis (Adonis). In Greek myth, Adonis was the first mortal lover that Aphrodite took, and she was deeply smitten with the young man of almost divine good looks. Their love, however, was doomed by his mortality. He was killed in a hunting accident, gored by a wild boar, and Aphrodite was powerless to save him.

- Turan is the subject of a number of representations, in which she appears without Atunis but never alone. In fact, she has a court called the circle of Turan that numbers up to 16 divine figures. In most cases, they act as her attendants, helping her to dress, bejewel herself, and generally make herself attractive. Sometimes they also assist Atunis with his appearance. This is definitely an Etruscan variation on the Aphrodite myths, and it's a culturally significant one for ancient Italy.
  - We know that later in the Roman world, being seen was a significant means of establishing and retaining status. And one way to do that was through one's retainers. An elite Roman was never alone, and the more elite, the more retainers.

  - It's likely that this variation in the myths of Turan records the Etruscan perspective on status and demonstrates that it applies to women, as well as to men.

- The topics of dress, adornment, love, and attendants lead us to a particular subset of the Turan mirror images. In these, Turan is only one of the attendants. She takes a supporting role rather than a central one,

and the entire subject demonstrates the Etruscan genius at manipulating Greek myth.

- These are the mirrors that show the adornment of a figure labeled Malavisch, the personification of marriage. Typically, she is seated in a throne-like chair with a footstool while other figures dress her hair, apply jewelry, or generally adorn her. Some mirrors have only two attendants. Others include images of oracular deities, such as Apollo, or prophets, such as a disembodied head that apparently prophesizes the success of the marriage.

- One of the finest examples of these shows three attendants working on Malavisch's appearance, overseen by Turan. The three attendants are named Zipna, Hinthial, and Munthuch; thus, Love (Turan) oversees Beauty (Zipna), Soul (Hinthial), and Elegance (Munthuch) in making preparations for a successful marriage.

Suggested Reading

Swaddling, *Etruscan Mirrors*.

van der Meer, *Interpretatio Etrusca*.

Questions to Consider

1. What differences can we see between the subjects of Greek myth used in domestic versus sacred spaces? How can we account for those stories that appear in both contexts?
2. Are domestic myths socially normative in the same way that public myths are?

Lecture
13

Etruscan Language and Literature

The facts of the Etruscan language reinforce the conclusions of scholars who believe that the Etruscan culture developed in Italy without any appreciable migration from the eastern Mediterranean. Evidence for the language is found across Italy, from Lucania in the south, to Corsica in the west, to the Po River valley in the north. To the east, 17 inscriptions have been found on the Greek island of Lemnos in the northern Aegean, perhaps left by a community of Etruscan traders there. Etruscan is the only non-Indo-European language known from ancient Italy, meaning that linguistically, it is unrelated to Latin, Greek, or other associated languages. Like the Etruscan people themselves, it was autochthonous—seeming to spring up from the ground.

Sources for the Etruscan Language

- Unfortunately, the Etruscans left behind no trace of a Homer or Vergil; indeed, they seem to have had no written literature at all in the sense of poems, novels, and so on. That's not to say that the Etruscans didn't tell stories—the use of narrative seems to be universal in humans—but they apparently never moved from oral to written literature.

- Some scholars attribute the lack of Etruscan literature to deliberate destruction of texts by either Romans or early Christians, but it seems unlikely that such a complete cultural purge could be achieved.

- It's more probable that for the Etruscans, certain types of information were conveyed in select media. For example, religious ceremonies, which had to be perfect, were written down on more-or-less permanent materials, while stories, which could be shaped into a range of versions by the teller, remained oral. Further, almost all educational instruction was oral. Consequently, the surviving examples of Etruscan writing are documentary rather than literary: religious ceremonies, divination

practices, epitaphs, votive inscriptions, labels on statues and personal objects, and names of both Etruscans and deities.

- Many of the texts found are brief and repetitive. For example, *mvthina*, the Etruscan term for "grave gift," is found inscribed on many objects found in tombs, probably to mark the goods and prevent the living from reusing them. Such inscriptions indicate the almost magical power of writing and its ability to, for example, change the nature of objects. Nevertheless, having many of the same short, formulaic inscriptions doesn't help us in the study of language. Fortunately, the Etruscans left behind more than 13,000 texts of various types for us to read and analyze.

The Development and Spread of Writing

- Etruscan was a spoken language long before it was written, but we can only truly study the language from the time the Etruscans began to write. The evidence for when and where this occurred is clear and demonstrates the critical role Etruscans played in the transmission of writing in the Western world.

- Alphabetic writing such as we use today was a Phoenician invention, first developed in cities along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean in what is today Lebanon. From the Phoenicians, alphabetic writing was transmitted to the Greeks in the course of trade and occasional warfare. The earliest Greek alphabetic writing preserved is on the so-called Nestor cup (c. 740 B.C.), found in a grave at a Greek trading post on the island of Ischia, just off the coast from Cumae, the first and northernmost Greek colony in the west.

- An important feature of the inscription on this cup is that it was written *retrograde*, that is, from right to left. This was a feature of Phoenician and other Semitic writing systems adopted by early Greek script, especially in the western colonies. A variant for writing direction is called *boustrophedon*, which refers to writing that switches direction with each line.

- Both of these writing directions are elements of Etruscan writing and demonstrate its connection to Greek alphabetic writing from the area of

Cumae, with which the Etruscans had a close trading relationship. The habit of writing was transmitted to the Etruscans about 700 B.C. From the Etruscans, it passed to the Romans, who adapted it into their Latin alphabet.

Document Samples

- The *Liber linteus* is a linen book now in the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb. As mentioned earlier, this text was written on the linen wrappings of a mummy displayed at the museum. The writing was first assumed to be a form of Egyptian hieroglyphs, but in 1891, it was finally recognized as Etruscan. Eventually, the strips of linen were restored to their correct order. When the text was translated, it was revealed to be a religious calendar dating to the 3rd or 2nd century B.C.
  - How the book came to Egypt is a mystery, although it might be a relic of the Etruscan diaspora following the Roman takeover of Etruria. Most scholars think it was written in one of the communities in southern Etruria, perhaps Cortona or Chiusi. As the only Etruscan linen book to survive, it's a unique example of the characteristic Etruscan book form: a long piece of linen folded back and forth like an accordion rather than rolled into a scroll.

  - The 230 surviving lines record elements of the strict observances required of Etruscan religion and its rituals in order to placate the gods successfully. As such, it gives us many examples of key elements of the language. For example, it confirms that Etruscan was an inflected language, with different forms of words for different uses in a sentence. It also gives us many forms of imperative verbs.

- The second-longest-surviving Etruscan text is also a religious calendar; this is the *Tabula Capuana*, or *Capua Tablet*, found in Campania. The tablet is a slab of terra-cotta with 62 lines inscribed on it in 10 sections. It gives directions on specific ceremonies to be performed on behalf of certain gods on particular dates.

- From the late Etruscan period, we have more than 30 bilingual texts—short inscriptions in both Etruscan and another language, such as Latin, which allow scholars to verify translations. Among the most important and longest of these bilinguals texts are the Pyrgi plaques. These three

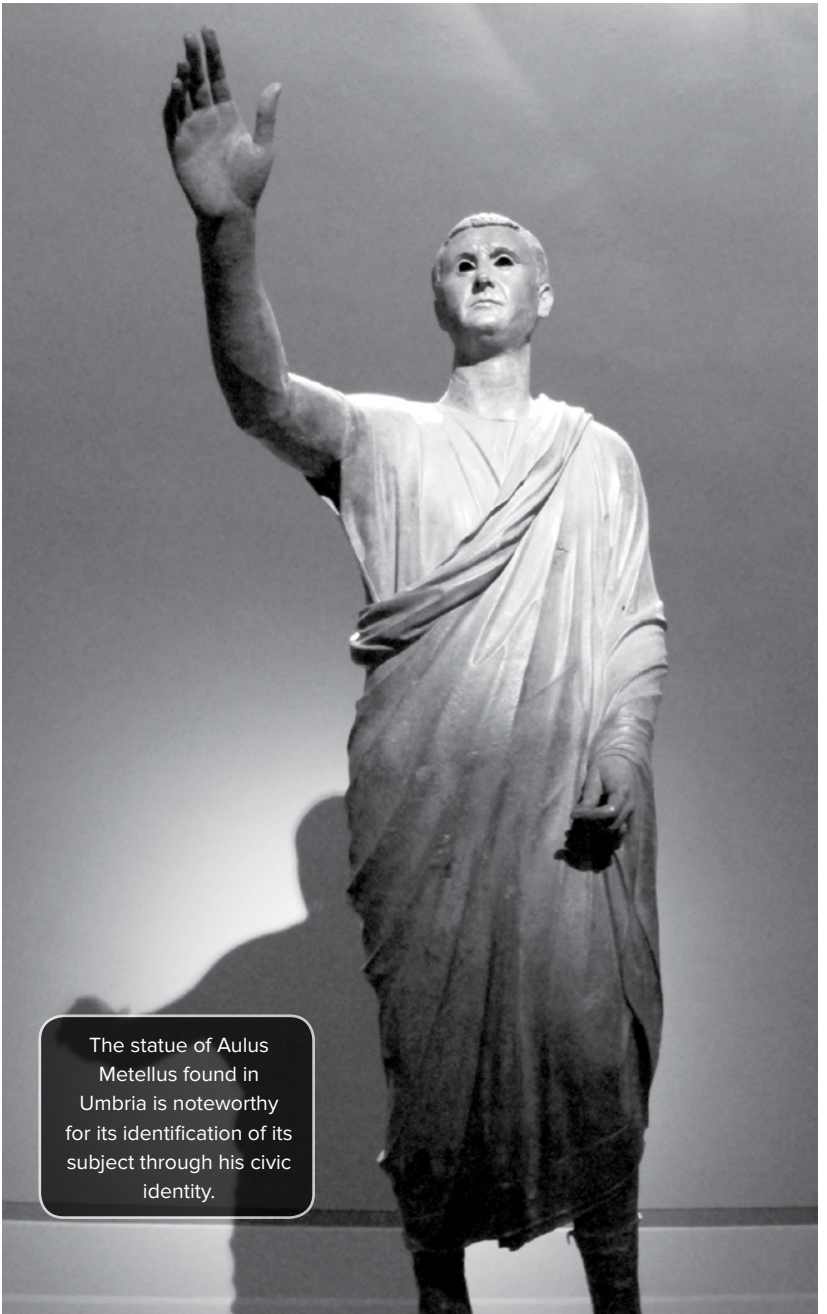
gold sheets discovered in excavations at the sanctuary of Pyrgi preserve both Etruscan and Phoenician versions of a religious dedication at the sanctuary in about 500 B.C.

- So far, we've looked at Etruscan texts on linen and gold, but the vast majority of inscriptions are on stone. Perhaps a typical one is the Cippus Perusinus, a travertine stone marker discovered outside the city of Perugia in 1822.
  - This standing stone from the 3rd or 2nd century B.C. was placed here as a public record of a legal contract, in this case, a contract relating to a transfer of private property. Posting such records was a standard practice in antiquity, allowing citizens access to an authoritative record of legal decisions that they could cite in the future.

  - Other sorts of legal documents preserved from the Etruscan world may have arisen from the sale or inheritance of property or from the discharge of soldiers from the Roman army. Such documents were incised on bronze sheets that could be displayed when required but filed away when not needed.

- Another remarkable find in bronze is a life-size statue of a man in a toga found in Umbria in 1566. Just above the hem on the front of the toga runs an incised dedicatory inscription, written retrograde in three lines: "For Aulus Metellus, son of Vel and Vesi, Tenine set up this statue as a dedication, by deliberation of the people."
  - This three-line inscription includes quite a bit of evidence about the Etruscan world. First, that Aulus is identified by both parents is remarkable for the ancient world and sets the Etruscans apart from cultures for their apparent equality in marriage and parenting.

  - Further, note that Aulus is identified in the statue through his civic identity, as demonstrated by the toga. This seems to be a deliberate reflection on the fact that the entire community approved the statue's dedication. The word *tuthines* used in the inscription refers to the whole of the citizen body in a popular assembly. Thus, the statue is a civic honor, a type of artwork well known from the ancient world but not preserved from Etruscan cities.



The statue of Aulus Metellus found in Umbria is noteworthy for its identification of its subject through his civic identity.

Transmission of Etruscan Script

- The transmission of Etruscan to later languages is a subfield of the study of historic linguistics. For example, we can trace the word *Rome* back to Etruscan from its Etruscan name, *Ruma*, and military and other words using the same root. However, the most important transmission from Etruscan is not vocabulary but the writing of alphabetic script. As mentioned, the Romans learned to write from the Etruscans, copying the borrowed alphabet and adjusting it the peculiarities of their own language. And from the Romans, the script spread across the world, wherever Western civilization went.

- But the Roman alphabet wasn't the only one in existence in ancient Italy. One remarkable find has allowed scholars to definitively trace Celtic scripts and the Germanic runic alphabets directly back to northern Etruscan writing.
  - This find was a cache of 26 Etruscan bronze helmets excavated in 1811 from a deposit near Negau in what is now Slovenia. Judging by their shapes, the helmets all date from 450 to 350 B.C. Based on their letter forms, many carried inscriptions from the 2nd century B.C., while the date of deposition is closer to 50 B.C., just before Roman conquest of the area.

  - The inscriptions are largely Celtic names and religious titles written in Etruscan letters. One inscription reads, "Harigast the priest." This is of historic significance because Harigast is Germanic, not Celtic, and it provides the first evidence of contact between Germanic speakers and Etruscan letter forms. These letters would serve as the basis for Germanic runic alphabets that were used from about 150 to 1100 A.D., when they finally lost out to their distant cousins, the Roman alphabet.

Orality in Etruscan Culture

- How a language develops and its internal structure reveal a great deal of information about any given culture. For the Etruscans, we see a spare, factual, non-literary language with no evidence of figures of speech, poetry, or imagery. This could be a product of the types of evidence that survive, but it also shows through the syntax that written language

was almost a shorthand, recorded with the assumption that the oral component would be added by the person reading it aloud.

- The primacy of orality in Etruscan culture is unusual for a literate society and shows a different relationship with language than any other people we know of in the ancient Mediterranean world. Whether that was responsible in any way for the Etruscans' eventual conquest, it does suggest why their language died out even while their use of the alphabet became one of their great legacies to the Western world.

Suggested Reading

Bonfante and Bonfante, *The Etruscan Language*.

Wallace, *Zikh Rasna: A Manual of the Etruscan Language and Inscriptions*.

Questions to Consider

1. How do surviving documents reveal the Etruscans' cultural values? What categories of information were deemed significant enough for preservation on permanent materials?
2. What does the full history of Etruscan literature reveal about the role of Italy in cultural transmission across the Mediterranean and across Europe? What are modern parallels for these exchanges of ideas and their contexts?

Lecture
14

Etruscan Government

Ancient accounts support a rather standard development of governmental organization for the Etruscans, beginning with the rule of an individual and moving, over time, to the rule of local or regional powers as the Etruscans spread throughout Italy. Eventually, the pull of local concerns overcame joint concerns and experience. Put another way, the shared religious and cultural identity of the Etruscans took a backseat to an assertion of their local geographical identity. Because the period of a sole ruler for all Etruscans is in the mythical past and can't really be analyzed beyond the fact of its existence, this lecture will start by looking at local and regional rule before turning to the Etruscan confederations.

Early Etruscan Rule

- For the period from 800 B.C. to about 600 B.C., each of the major Etruscan cities fell under the rule of a king. This figure was a ruler for life but not a hereditary monarch. Rather, he seems to have been selected from among the aristocratic families of the community. Thus, each major city and its surrounding territory was essentially a sovereign state ruled by a king whose authority came from the support of the wealthiest citizens.

- The best testimony we have of the process of selecting kings is from one of the early books of the Roman historian Livy, who describes the emigration to Rome in about 600 B.C. of Lucius Tarquinius Priscus, known to Livy as Lucumo.
  - According to Livy, Lucumo emigrated to Rome after failing to gain office in Tarquinia. With the death of the king Ancus Marcius in Rome (whose sons were all minors), Lucumo convinced the popular assembly to elect him king. Almost immediately, he added 100 new men to the Senate to secure his rule. The support of the common people seems to have been reinforced through generosity in building programs that supplied both jobs and civic improvements.

- Some scholars believe that Lucumo was not a king but a Greek-style *tyrant*: a ruler whose power comes from the lower classes and who governs to the detriment of the aristocrats, violating traditional power structures. Many of the Greek city-states of the period, including Athens, were ruled by tyrants who were responsible for government within their cities and for negotiations with other city-states.

- An excellent example of a tyrant negotiating alliances comes from the sanctuary at Pyrgi and the mention of a treaty between Cerveteri and the Phoenicians.
  - The founder of the sanctuary was Thefarie Velianas of Cerveteri, thought to be one of those tyrants who rose to power at the expense of aristocratic rule. Evidence that he was a tyrant comes from the gold Pyrgi tablets, according to which he had been a chief of the Etruscans for 11 years.

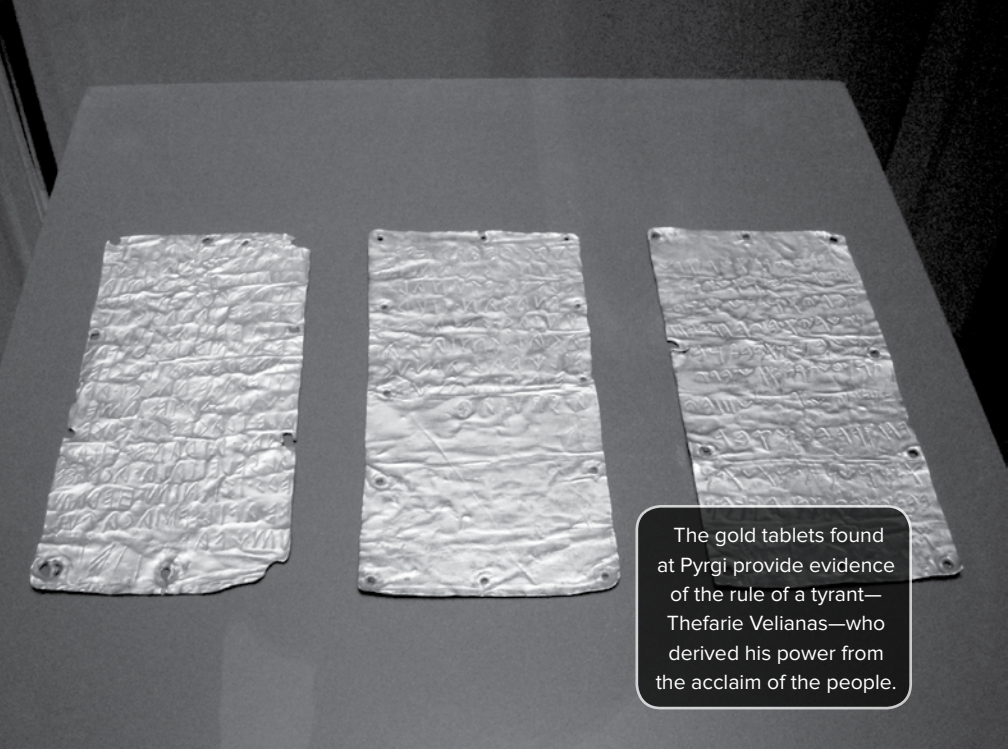
  - Such tyrants as Thefarie were both religious and secular rulers—priests, as well as kings. The fact that the Phoenicians signed a treaty with Thefarie personally illustrates his authority.

- Such treaties and the overthrow of aristocratic rule may be part of a pattern during the 6th century B.C. In many places, including Athens, Corinth, Syracuse, and possibly, Cerveteri and Rome, hereditary aristocratic rule was being replaced with tyranny.

A Shift toward Egalitarianism

- The reconstruction of the 6th-century-B.C. city at Marzabotto with one that featured uniform blocks and identically sized houses may also reflect a 5th-century-B.C. shift to a more egalitarian society, just as the use of orthogonal planning did at the Greek city of Miletus, where the city was redesigned to reflect the new democratic government.

- At Gabii, about 11 miles east of Rome, the remains of a palace from the late 6th century B.C. were found in 2011. The archaeologists concluded that the palace, destroyed in the early 5th century B.C. and replaced with an orthogonally planned city, belonged to Sextus Tarquinius, son of the last king of Rome. Although literary sources don't survive from the Etruscan



The gold tablets found at Pyrgi provide evidence of the rule of a tyrant—Thefarie Velianas—who derived his power from the acclaim of the people.

world, it's notable that the impulses toward representative government swept much of the Mediterranean in the late 6th and early 5th centuries B.C., and Marzabotto may provide some of the evidence that this trend included Etruria.

- As mentioned in an earlier lecture, the shields and chairs found in tombs from the period emphasize the public roles of men in the arenas of warfare and government service. In turn, this assertion of public roles was a side effect of the rejection of kingship in the Etruscan world, the establishment of democratic or republic forms of government around the Mediterranean, and the rise of a "middle class."

New Political Structures

- The 5th century B.C. was also a period of new political structures based on the city-state and the league. The city-state, referred to in Etruscan as the *methlum*, included both the city and the territory associated with it.

- There were a number of types of magistrates in this period (magistrate, priest, chief local magistrate, and so on). As far as we can tell, all of these—both secular and religious offices—were elected annually, probably as an extreme reaction against the lifetime rule of previous rulers.

- Annually elected magistracies served as a check on power by limiting it to one annual term. Dividing the power of the previous ruler into multiple magistracies created a collegial form of government that also served as a check against tyranny.

- Nevertheless, there were problems with this form of government. For one thing, the annual magistrates had no incentive to undertake any projects that would take longer than a year to complete.
  - There was also no practical way to launch a long-term war. Skirmishes between Etruscan cities were generally undertaken as annual raids, without long-term strategies. This meant that territory rarely changed hands in any meaningful way. Enemies were never conquered but attacked, then left alone to rebuild, counterattack, or develop their own alliances for the future.

  - These factors put the Etruscans at a disadvantage when confronting such people as the Gauls or Greeks, who still relied on kings or tyrants who could plan for the long term or muster power from larger areas.

Etruscan Leagues

- To address these issues, the Etruscans created confederations; 12 of the leading cities from each region made up the three Etruscan leagues. In Etruria itself was the Etruscan League. Another league was formed in the south from cities in Campania and a third from cities in and around the Po River valley in the north.

- Annually, the elected magistrates, priests, and many others from the 12 cities would gather at a sort of pan-Etruscan sanctuary called a *fanu* (Latin: *fanum*). Once there, they would make sacrifices; read omens; discuss political, diplomatic, and military matters; and elect an official to be in charge of the league for one year.

- Even with the leagues, the Etruscans still had problems generating collective action. One classic example of this difficulty was the Etruscan response to the overthrow of Tarquinius Superbus. Initially, his home city, Tarquinia, responded and was joined by its ally, Veii. Only after both were defeated did a third city, Chiusi, march on Rome, but its attempted siege ultimately failed. This sort of piecemeal response is typical in a confederated organization.

- For an example with longer-term consequences for all the Etruscans, the Roman siege of Veii went on for almost 10 years, from about 405 to 396 B.C. During that time, the people of Veii were able to find only two allies among the communities in southern Etruria and those only because they feared that if Veii fell, they'd be next in line for Roman attack.
  - In such a desperate situation as Veii, the Romans would have elected a dictator, a constitutional office that placed emergency civic and military power in the hands of one man. Veii reacted similarly, but this action angered other Etruscan city-states, which then refused to assist Veii.

  - Because of their league system and rejection of the steps taken by Veii to try to save itself, the Etruscans refused to act to stop Rome. As a consequence, Rome went on to defeat Etruscan cities one after another through the next century.

- The failure of the leagues to act against threats and the absence of constitutional forms that allowed individual city-states to respond to threats with the temporary rule of a single powerful individual made them all vulnerable. The result is seen throughout the 4th century B.C., as individual Etruscan city-states made separate treaties with Rome.

- Replying piecemeal to enemies was a great failure, but perhaps an even larger one was the inability of the Etruscans to decide who their enemies truly were. The reliance on local, annually elected magistrates and a spotty league system led to inconsistent application of diplomacy and power.
  - For example, in 311 B.C., the Etruscans sent 1,200 troops to fight for Carthage against Syracuse, but only four years later, in 307 B.C., 18 Etruscan ships were sent to help Syracuse against the Carthaginians.

- These could have been separate actions by individual city-states whose positions encouraged the support of different sides in the struggle, but the fact that they occurred demonstrates the weakness of Etruscan central government and planning.

Etruscan Influence on Roman Governance

- The Etruscan system of governance shows the problems avoided by the more flexible Roman forms. Nevertheless, ancient authors agree that Roman offices were based on Etruscan examples and that many of the trappings of Roman government, such as the *curule* chair, *fasces*, toga, and so forth, were initially Etruscan.

- For example, in one of the latest Etruscan portraits (1st century B.C.), a large bronze of an adult man inscribed with the name Aulus Metellus stands, one hand extended in a gesture of speaking, wearing a toga, senatorial boots, and a ring indicating his middle-class rank. These were all Etruscan signs of civic service and status adopted by the Romans.

- This is far more than a superficial list of things the Romans borrowed from the Etruscans. It indicates that the outward signs of rule were Etruscan. We might also argue that the signs worked only because they were recognized symbols of the same thing in each culture. For example, the *fasces* represented the ultimate authority in the state, the people, and their vesting of that authority in the person of the ruler.

- The Etruscan *toga picta* worn by the statue of Jupiter in the Capitoline temple was associated with serving magistrates and successful generals, and its purple color was associated with royalty. The Etruscans also originated the regular white toga of citizenship, as well as the *toga praetexta*, a white toga with a purple stripe that, again, was a sign of a serving magistrate. As with the Etruscans, Roman men assumed through these symbols an identity that was originally based on their city and, later, their civic rank.

Suggested Reading

Maggiani, “Republican Political Forms,” in Torelli, ed., *The Etruscans*, pp. 227–241.

Menichetti, “Political Forms in the Archaic Period,” in Torelli, ed., *The Etruscans*, pp. 205–225.

Stoddart, “The Political Landscape of Etrutria.”

Questions to Consider

1. How did the development of representative government in Etruria mirror that in Rome and Athens? What conclusions should we draw about the contemporary changes in government across the Mediterranean?
2. How did the form of Etruscan government above the level of the city-state influence Etruscan interactions between cities and with foreign powers? How did it limit responses to crises? How would ancient Italy have been different with a strong Etruscan central government?

Lecture
15

Etruscan Warriors and Warfare

As individual warriors, the Etruscans were probably no better or worse than the opponents they faced in the ancient world: the Gauls, Greek city-states, or Rome. And they might have had greater motivations to fight than many of their opponents. If we accept these claims, then we must seek another cause for the centuries-long streak of military losses for the Etruscans. In this lecture, we'll examine Etruscan military and naval organization and tactics. As we'll see, the ultimate failure of the Etruscans at war probably rests with poor centralized command and a flawed or nonexistent grand strategy.

Etruscan Military Forces

- The evidence is conclusive that war was endemic in Etruscan society. City-states, which were truly independent, waged small-scale war with their neighbors, annually raiding them to capture cattle, slaves, and loot. However, casualties in battle were generally low, primarily because of the heavy armor worn by soldiers in the infantry and cavalry.

- Etruscans' weapons and armor differed dramatically from those used by other cultures, such as the Greeks, Romans, and Carthaginians. Before the 5th century B.C., bronze was used predominately for both weapons and armor. The primary weapons were the flanged axe—a broad-headed axe that could be wielded with two hands—and a single-edged sword.

- The only missile weapons were light javelins, which were thrown before engaging the enemy in hand-to-hand combat. The Romans later adopted these and acknowledged their Etruscan origin. A shield was also standard for Etruscans. The great variety of shield sizes and shapes reflects both Etruscan regional variations and the individual nature of arming. Shields were almost all of bronze or wood covered in bronze.

- In addition to the shield, the full panoply included bronze helmet, greaves, and breastplate. Many types of breastplates have been found.
  - Early examples, primarily from the 7th and 6th centuries B.C., are a type of armor known in central Italy that consisted of three bronze disks, two arranged over the chest and one over the stomach, all originally supported and connected by leather bands or a linen garment. In later examples, the disks were joined into a single piece of armor.

  - In the 5th century B.C., these breastplates were supplanted by the cuirass. This was a solid body armor that covered from the collarbones to the hips and had idealized musculature portrayed on both the front and back.

  - The final refinement in body armor was the development of linen armor, either *lamellar*—small overlapping bronze plates sewn on a linen garment—or layers of linen soaked in glue to make them stiff and sword-resistant. Both of these variants were lighter, cheaper, and more flexible than the muscled cuirass.

- Etruscan soldiers typically wore bronze helmets with a rounded body, a slightly narrower neck, and a flared, usually flat, rim. The characteristic shape is referred to as a Negau helmet type, from a cache of 26 helmets dating from 450 to 350 B.C. and found near Negau, Slovenia.

- Note that the main weapons of hand-to-hand combat for the Etruscans were designed for cutting rather than thrusting. This means that warriors had to close to within a few feet of their opponents to engage. They also had to fight in open formation because generating enough force to do harm meant swinging their weapons in large arcs.
  - As a result of the inability to fight in close ranks, each warrior in a battle was essentially fighting a series of single combats. For the sake of honor and reputation, there was also an incentive to fight that single combat prior to any larger engagement and in front of the entire army.

  - Literary and visual evidence supports this assertion, including the stories of battles decided by such champions as the Vipinas brothers.

The Mars of Todi (c. 400 B.C.) is not a god but an idealized image of a warrior, wearing linen armor.

- Like other armed forces in the ancient world, the Etruscans used cavalry. These mounted warriors were armed and armored identically to the infantry, with the possible exception of the muscled cuirass, which seems to have been adapted slightly so as not to restrict the riders' movements.

- Finally, many examples of chariots have been found in Etruscan tombs and illustrated in art from 775 to 575 B.C. Chariots in this period were used as symbols of aristocratic status, rather than in warfare. The elite Etruscans traveled to and from battle, processed in ceremonies, and hunted from chariots.

Military Organization

- From the 8th into the 6th centuries B.C., Etruscan army units were based on social or familial factors. The majority were organized by clans; thus, they were essentially feudal levies fighting on the orders of an aristocrat at the head of the clan. In this way, the military served to reinforce the power structure of the aristocrats. Given that at least part of aristocratic reputation was based on military success, the result was a number of units with strong motivations to act independently and to look for opportunities to engage the enemy and acquire loot—with disastrous effects for larger wartime strategy.

- The decision to declare war in the period before about 500 B.C. was based on the actions and aspirations of powerful aristocratic men who had a personal interest in warfare. Activities that might win a war without actual battle, such as participating in a long-term siege or burning crops to starve enemy troops of food supplies, were anathema to the commanders and units in this military structure.

- Instead of the well-trained Greek hoplites of the Persian Wars, we should picture Etruscan forces as a looser formation without mutual support or disciplined maneuvers. No doubt the individual warriors were fierce, determined, and aggressive, but operating with such a large degree of autonomy put them at a constant disadvantage against Greek or Roman foes fighting en masse. Literary evidence for battle formation supports these conclusions.
  - For example, Dionysius offers this account of the Battle at Cumae: "When the barbarians [Etruscans] learned that they [the Greeks]

were ready to fight, they uttered their war-cry and came to close quarters, in the barbarian fashion, without any order, the horse and the foot intermingled."

- Furthermore, Livy says of a battle in 311 B.C.: "The Etruscans had no reserves to support their first line, and all fell in front of their standards or around them." There is no evidence of the Etruscans ever creating a rank-and-file sort of organization or one based on unit preparedness, as the Romans did.

- It's estimated that each city-state could muster 4,000 to 5,000 men at arms under their clan leaders. If they were unified, the Etruscan League could mobilize as many as 60,000 men, but the city-states rarely came together. In 225 B.C., in one instance in which Etruscan forces were unified, they numbered about 54,000. In comparison, the Romans at this time raised an annual army of 36,000 men. The Ptolemies, Greek rulers in Egypt of this period, had an army of 22,000, supplemented by 30,000 Egyptian auxiliaries, almost identical to the size of the Etruscan force.

Weaknesses in the Etruscan Military

- The way war is waged and the armies that wage it are institutions that reflect the culture in which they were found. For the Etruscans, that means that the deep stratification of society and its entrenched social organization by clan were responsible for the form of the army and how it was used.

- Aristocrats armed and fielded forces from their own resources and on their own authority. There seems to have been no political structure that served to require or deny aristocratic participation in any particular conflict, and without that structure, the Etruscans also seem to have had no grand strategy. Cities or units from them fought each other, as well as various foreign foes, sometimes on both sides of a conflict.

- By the 5th century B.C., the Greeks had fully adopted the phalanx, with its benefits of mutual support by combatants in the first two or three lines of battle. The Romans developed the maniple system, a flexible organization that allowed their units to fight efficiently in virtually any terrain. The Etruscans, however, improved their armor but never created

the mechanisms to allow unified command and control or advanced battlefield maneuvers.

- Although Livy tells us that at one time, the Etruscans controlled Italy from the Alps to the strait of Sicily, they gradually lost all territory because of the culturally based limitations their military faced. We can see the result of this limitation in their alliances—and it's not just that they picked the losing side; sometimes, they supported each side in turn.
  - The 414 B.C. alliance with Athens against Syracuse made sense following Etruscan losses against the Greeks in 474 and 414 B.C., but it didn't last. In 311 B.C., the Etruscans sent 1,200 troops to fight in Sicily for the Carthaginian general Hamilcar against Agathocles of Syracuse. Only four years later—in 307 B.C.—they sent aid to Agathocles against the Carthaginians.

  - Generally, though, the Etruscans supported the Carthaginians—their allies since at least 510 B.C.—by providing military support during their wars against the Greeks of southern Italy and against Rome.

Etruscan Naval Forces

- Many ancient historians, including Diodorus, Dionysius, Strabo, and Livy, tell us that the Etruscans held dominion over the sea for a long time. Indeed, they were called *thalassokratores*, "rulers of the seas." If they didn't control the entire Mediterranean, they certainly sailed its length and threatened other communities from west to east. In addition to various raids and occasional attacks, the Etruscans fought a series of major naval battles; tracing these from 535 B.C. down to 335 B.C. gives us a sense of the larger trend in naval combat in the Etruscan world—from initial victories to inevitable crushing defeat.

- The almost exclusively local command structure found in the Etruscan military was applied to its naval forces, as well, with the result that they also acted autonomously. We have a great deal of evidence of this, including tomb carvings of ships and boat models found in tombs, both of which were meant to convey the aristocratic status of the deceased.

- Before the 5th century B.C., the Etruscan and other navies seem to have relied on the *pentekonter*, a warship rowed by 50 oarsmen. By the 5th century B.C., however, the Greeks had almost all transitioned to the *trireme*. Rowed by 170 oarsmen, this ship was both faster and more maneuverable than the *pentekonter*. And the Etruscan failure to adopt this superior ship design doomed their navy to a succession of losses against the trireme navies of the Greeks.

Suggested Reading

Caspari, "The Etruscans and the Sicilian Expedition of 414–413 BC."

D'Agostino, "Military Organization and Social Structure in Archaic Etruria."

Hopkins, "The Arms, Equipment, and Ceremonial Vessels of the Early Etruscan Warriors."

McCartney, "The Military Indebtedness of Early Rome to Etruria."

Richardson, "The Muscle Cuirass in Etruria and Southern Italy."

Questions to Consider

1. In what ways does the structure, command, and organization of the Etruscans' military reflect their social structure?
2. How did the Etruscans' reticence to innovate in either military or naval matters contribute to their losses in both areas from the 5th century B.C. onward?

Lecture
16

Mediterranean Artisans and Merchants

As we saw in the last lecture, Greek literary sources proclaimed Etruscan dominion over the Mediterranean basin for a long period of time. What's notable about that naval history for the issue of trade is that this coverage seems to have been driven by the Etruscan trade network. That is, naval engagements supported the system of trade and trading posts rather than trade developing as a byproduct of conquest. Furthermore, it was Etruscan contact with Greek and Phoenician markets and materials that spurred some of the most dramatic changes seen in Etruscan culture, from styles of art to the adoption of writing. Thus, in many ways, trade drove Etruscan society economically, culturally, and militarily.

Trade and Military Action

- In the 8th century B.C., the Greeks entered the Tyrrhenian Sea and began to settle on the west coast of Italy, first establishing a trading post (*emporium*) on the island of Ischia off the coast of the Bay of Naples, then founding the colony of Cumae just across from it in 775 B.C. In response, the Etruscans founded Capua, which seems to have returned the region to the status quo for some time. The Greeks did not encroach any further north, and Cumae became the primary Greek trading partner of the Etruscans.

- This mutually profitable situation continued until just after 600 B.C., when a new wave of colonization started, which included Pompeii, Herculaneum, Paestum, and the northern Mediterranean Greek colonies along what we would now call the French Riviera. The Greeks then moved south and occupied parts of Corsica in 566 B.C., attracted primarily by the potential for trade.

- Unfortunately for the Greeks, the Etruscans already had a trading post on the same bay at the city of Nicaea. Conflict over the area was inevitable. In 535 B.C., just outside the bay, a combined fleet of 120 Etruscan and

Carthaginian ships faced a Greek fleet of about 60. Forty of the Greek ships were destroyed; realizing they could no longer defend the emporium, the Greeks abandoned it to the Etruscans.

- Meanwhile, the Phoenicians had moved in and occupied the island of Sardinia. They had traded and used the harbors along its east coast for centuries. But by 650 B.C., they began to exploit the mineral resources in the interior and built a fortified outpost to protect their interests. Their alliance with the Etruscans was based on their desire to protect Sardinian resources from the Greeks. It's worth noting, however, that the Etruscans and Phoenicians also fought skirmishes off the coast of Spain in their struggle to control the resources of what would become Andalusia. In that case, the Phoenicians were victorious, and the Etruscans pulled back.

Imports into Etruscan Territories

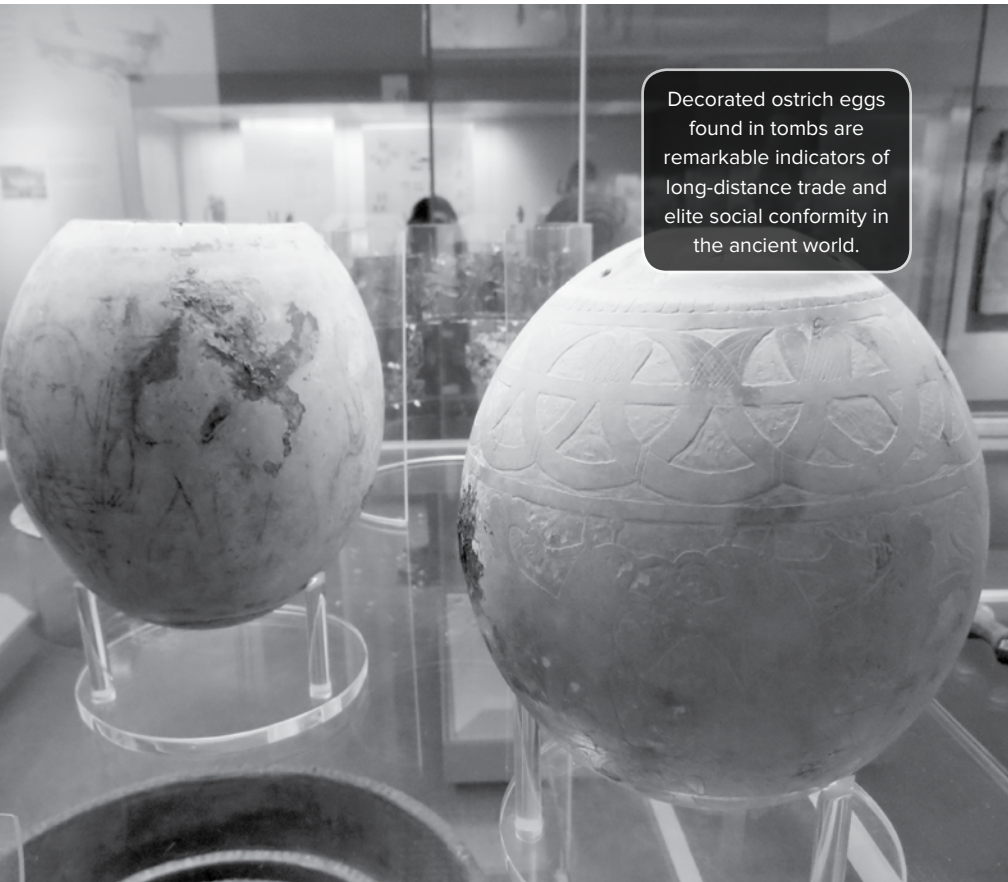
- The enormous scale and long-term effects of the Etruscans' vast trading network may not seem immediately apparent when viewed from the outside. The finds from Etruscan tombs, temples, and communities provide literally tons of evidence for foreign materials entering Etruscan territory. Much of that came from the Greek world, particularly the red-and-black figure vases, imported largely from Athens.

- Perhaps even more popular than the Athenian vases were earlier imports from Corinth. This was the Greek city-state with the best connection to the Levant; it served as the conduit of the Orientalizing style into Greek culture. The Corinthian pottery of the 6th century B.C. was the leading style at the time and was exported into Etruscan communities in large amounts.

- Phoenician imports were also a significant factor in the Etruscan economy and the development of Etruscan culture. By the 7th century B.C. , Phoenician merchants were responsible for supplying objects that connected the Etruscans to the cultures of the eastern Mediterranean, including the Assyrian Empire, ancient Egypt, the Levant, and countless small communities across the Near East. These imports included bronze and silver vases, faience or shell objects, ostrich eggs, ivories, and glass.

- The metalwork was decorated with motifs taken from Assyrian and Egyptian art, with images of hunts, war, landscapes, and hieroglyphics. The images of rulers in chariots would certainly have appealed to Etruscan aristocrats, while the exoticism of the lotus, papyrus, and Egyptian landscape scenes evoked a sophisticated international culture.

- Of all the Phoenician imports, perhaps the most curious are the ostrich eggs, which were found in tombs dating to the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. from at least seven Etruscan cities. In this period, ostriches were indigenous to Mesopotamia, and the eggs were both a delicacy and a luxury export.



Decorated ostrich eggs found in tombs are remarkable indicators of long-distance trade and elite social conformity in the ancient world.

- In addition to the ostrich eggs, high-quality ivory reliefs and inlays, originally designed as decoration for furniture or household objects, have been found at Etruscan sites. Made of elephant ivory and carved by Phoenician artists in a variety of Assyrian and Egyptian styles, the ivories date to the 9th through 7th centuries B.C.
  - Hundreds of examples of imported worked ivories have been found at Etruscan sites over at least a four-century period, demonstrating the continued demand for the material. Many of these were made by workshops in the Levant and exported to Etruria. Others, however, may have been carved by artisans who emigrated to Etruria and set up their own workshops in the region. These Phoenician craftsmen also set up Etruscan schools of ivory carving.

  - One Etruscan work done on imported ivory is a cylindrical box, called a *pyxis*, found in a necropolis at Chiusi. The *pyxis* comes from the Orientalizing period (600s B.C.). However, unlike the Assyrian-inspired designs on other works of this period, the designs and figures on this box rely on Greek models and show an awareness of Greek literature, specifically, Homer's *Odyssey*.

- Along with these imported luxury goods, we also find objects made in glass. Mainly small vessels, beads, amulets, and other items of personal adornment, these objects show the spread of glasswork and glassmaking from the eastern Mediterranean into central Italy by the 6th century B.C. Studies have shown that the Etruscans probably didn't have a glass industry, but they may have imported raw glass from the eastern Mediterranean and made their own glass objects.

Etruscan Exports

- Despite centuries of excavation at sites around the Mediterranean, only a handful of Etruscan objects have been found at Greek, Phoenician, or other sites. This has led to a great deal of speculation about what the Etruscans exported in exchange for the obvious imports.
  - Some have argued that the Etruscans may have purchased items rather than traded for them, but no Etruscan coins have been found at foreign sites. Others have suggested that the Etruscans exported raw materials, such as timber, copper, iron, agricultural products,

and so on, and that such materials cannot be identified in the later finished forms they took. But for a number of reasons, it seems that these would also have been, at best, secondary exports.

- Perhaps a more likely theory is that raw materials from Etruria were partially processed before export. Rather than grapes, for example, Etruscans exported wine; rather than fish, they sold fish sauce or products; and rather than copper or iron, they produced bronze ingots or bronze objects, such as statuary and household items.

- Exploitation of mines in the area of Massa Marittima began in the 9th century B.C. The Greek emporium on Pithekoussai is thought to have been founded to trade for copper, as well as raw and worked bronze from this northern area. Cumae seems to have succeeded in the 8th century as the predominant Greek trading city. But Etruscan bronzes spread far beyond the Tyrrhenian Sea. A bronze-decorated tripod from Vulci was found on the Athenian acropolis, for example. Other bronzes have been found at a range of Greek cities and sanctuaries.

- The Etruscans were also famous in antiquity for their terra-cotta works of art, specifically religious sculptures, but these don't seem to have been exported on a large scale into the Greek world. Instead, the Etruscan vessels that have been found at Greek sites probably reveal the movements of Etruscan traders themselves. For example, Etruscan *bucchero* pottery vessels found at Greek sites were probably deposited by Etruscan merchants as votives in local sanctuaries.

- Long-range and large-scale trade had profound effects on Etruscan culture. We've already touched on these effects in the world of art, but they can also be seen in religion. In Etruscan communities that either hosted Greek trading posts, such as Graviscae, or were on the coast, such as Pyrgi, altars, offerings, temples, and sometimes entire sanctuaries were built for the worship of foreign deities.

- The expansion of Etruscan trade also seems to have been one of the drivers in the social and political changes that came about with the rise of

a middle class—groups of merchants whose wealth and influence began to supplant that of the traditional aristocrats.

- Evidence for this shift is seen in Etruscan tombs, such as the Tomb of the Ship in Tarquinia (mid-5th century B.C.). The tomb is named for the enormous wall painting of a ship on one of the walls of the burial chamber. This was originally interpreted as a warship and, thus, thought to be typical of the aristocratic military display found in tombs with armor or chariots. However, more careful study shows that it is a large cargo vessel.

- It seems obvious that the tomb belonged to the owner of this ship, who projected his identity in a way similar to aristocrats with their displays of armor or model warships. Here, the ship celebrates the owner's social status and the source of his wealth and public role in the community.

Trade in the Etruscan World

- From this survey of trade practices, routes, and the effects of trade on the Etruscan culture, it seems safe to say that the Etruscans were not isolated but connected by trading networks with the other major civilizations of the ancient Mediterranean and with distant lands, from Spain and Africa to Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Levant.

- Etruscan aristocrats had a great deal in common culturally with their peers across the ancient world and celebrated their elite identity with many of the same markers. Indeed, wealthy Etruscans may have had more in common with wealthy Assyrians than with poorer members of their own communities—a sign of an interconnected world.

- We also learn from this material that the transmission of Greek and Phoenician culture into the Etruscan world occurred because of trade. The desire for foreign works of art fueled the development of Etruscan workshops in a variety of media, including ivory, metal, and terra-cotta.

- Finally, the rise of the merchant class shows one means by which the social changes of the 5th century B.C. occurred, shifting power and status from the traditional elites to the new moneyed individuals in the Etruscan city-states.

Suggested Reading

Hackens, ed., *Navies and Commerce of the Greeks, the Carthaginians and the Etruscans in the Tyrrhenian Sea*.

Turfa, "International Contacts," in Bonfante, ed., *Etruscan Life and Afterlife*.

Questions to Consider

1. How did luxury imports change the shape of Etruscan art and the makeup of artistic workshops?
2. What does the pattern of Etruscan exports (or the absence of these) in Greek and Phoenician cities reveal about where Etruscan merchants were stationed and what they sold?

Lecture 17

Bronze, Terra-Cotta, and Portraiture

In the last lecture, we discussed artisans, the development of workshops, and international trade both into and out of the Etruscan city-states. In this lecture, we'll go a bit deeper into some of the industries that supplied that trade, as well as the large market for these materials within Etruscan communities. As we'll see, the Etruscans were famed in ancient Italy for their artistic ability. They created breathtaking gold jewelry, bronze sculpture, and decorative toilet articles, as well as terra-cotta sculpture and vessels. Sought after by Etruscans as well as foreign peoples, including the kings of Rome, these products contributed tremendously to Etruscan wealth and culture and shaped the Etruscans' foreign contacts.

Patterns in the Etruscan Art World

- The major categories of Etruscan art included tomb paintings, bronze statuary, gold jewelry, and such terra-cotta works a freestanding sculpture, relief plaques, and decorative vessels. In all these media, we see a number of consistent patterns.

- First, the Etruscans created a well-developed portrait tradition of images that transcended the generic. They developed what has been termed *true portraiture*, capturing the image, as well as the character of the person portrayed.

- Another large pattern in Etruscan art was a close connection to the current subjects, materials, and style trends of Greek art in the city-states of southern Italy and Sicily. Clearly, the Etruscans were aware of the latest styles, valued Greek art, and may have imported both Greek art and Greek artists to work in Etruscan communities. This influence profoundly changed Etruscan art, both initially and as styles developed. It was also a critical early source of Roman exposure to Greek art, given that the

subjects, styles, and media of Greek art were transmitted to Rome via Etruria centuries before the Roman conquest of Greek city-states.

Metalworking Techniques

- The success of the Etruscans in the manufacture of bronze and terra-cotta artworks was based on the tremendous natural resources found in the Etruscan heartland. In terms of minerals, Etruria is the richest region of subalpine Italy for metal deposits, including copper, iron, lead, silver, antimony, zinc, arsenic, mercury, and tin. In addition to the mines and clay beds, vast forests in the region provided the timber for firing clay and smelting metal. The Etruscans were superb at exploiting these resources.

- The Etruscans used a full range of sophisticated techniques for working bronze, iron, silver, and gold. The most common technique for creating objects was casting, either *direct casting* or *lost-wax casting*. With direct casting, molten metal is poured into a mold. With lost-wax casting, a wax model of the final form is encased in a mold, which is then heated to remove the wax so that it can be replaced with molten metal. The latter was the standard technique used for the finest ancient bronze sculpture.

- Often, casting was used to create sheets of raw material that were shaped using other techniques. For example, much Etruscan armor, including helmets and breastplates, began as cast sheets of bronze that were finished with hammer work. Other metalworking techniques included *raising*, that is, hammering a flat disk of metal over a stake to shape it; *annealing*, that is, heating, then cooling the metal slowly to soften and make it ductile; and *lathing*, that is, spinning and burnishing metal into desired shapes.

- All these techniques are fairly standard and were exploited by all the major Mediterranean civilizations. What set the Etruscans apart was their use of refined decorative and finishing techniques that were far more advanced than even the Greeks were using at the same time.
  - Decorative techniques were more varied and time-consuming than those used to create the metal and required a higher level of expertise. The workshops were probably organized hierarchically, with the most experienced artists employed in the decorative side of the industry.

- Decorative techniques included *flat chasing*, in which a hammer and punches were used to create low-relief designs; *stamping*, in which decorative stamps were hammered into the surface of the metal; *engraving*, in which fine-pointed tools were used to draw designs on metal; and *repoussé*, embossed work carried out by hammering from the back.

Portraiture

- Decorative techniques were critical in the development of later Etruscan and Roman art, notably, the portrait tradition and the promotion of elite male martial identity. Some examples in the key industries of terra-cotta and bronze give a sense of the development of Etruscan art specifically in the creation of portraiture.

- One example is a 5th-century-B.C. hand-carved terra-cotta head of a young man. His face has regular features, including a slightly open mouth, long nose, arched eyebrows, and large, almond-shaped eyes. The figure's volute-shaped ear, lack of facial detail, large eyes, and patterned hair all show elements of Greek sculpture of the 6th century B.C. This is probably the result of an Etruscan sculptor basing his work on popular Greek examples. This rather generic, idealized figure is a votive, designed to be displayed at a sanctuary.

- Sanctuaries and tombs are our best sources for Etruscan bronze sculptures that were not created as votives. One portrait bust, from c. 300 B.C., may have been made for one of these locations, although its findspot is unrecorded. The portrait has been long known as Brutus, the founder of the Roman Republic, but that identification is baseless; still, it likely represents a specific individual.
  - The tight-lipped, middle-aged figure looks ahead in a way that reinforces his dignity, a key quality for men. His features do not adopt the Greek ideal of youthfulness. In fact, the work has modeling in the flesh of the face that indicates forehead wrinkles, bags under the eyes, and deep grooves that run from the nose to the corners of his mouth.

- The work was probably displayed in a house and later moved to a tomb, similar to the painted portraits of ancestors found in Etruscan tombs of the late 4th century B.C.

- A contemporary piece in terra-cotta provides a good example of the range of portrait sculpture in Etruria in terms of medium, subject, technique, and context. This is a fragmentary molded votive head of a woman. With its classicizing forms of facial features and accessories, the figure demonstrates the Etruscan adoption of Greek conventions. The remains of red paint on the face, however, reflect the Roman practice of painted terra-cotta statuary.

- Etruscan portrait traditions continued to affect Italic and Roman art in the period following the political absorption of the Etruscan city-states. An excellent example is the votive portrait bust of a man from the early part of the 1st century found at Cerveteri. This terra-cotta portrait is of a middle-aged man with close-cropped hair, slightly prominent ears and nose, and forehead wrinkles. The figure, apparently a portrait of a specific individual, has a closed, straight mouth, displaying the important virtues of maturity and dignity.

- Many of the same features can be seen on an approximately contemporary bronze portrait, named in an Etruscan inscription as Aulus Metellus. This piece demonstrates the continuation of the Etruscan sculpture traditions of bronze work and portraiture, here seen in a large-scale sculpture. The man stands, one hand extended in a gesture of speaking; he is wearing a toga and Roman senatorial boots. The impression is of a man defined by his public identity and accomplishments, here, in the civic arena as opposed to the military.

Jewelry

- In addition to their remarkable skill in base metals, such as iron and bronze, Etruscan artisans also excelled at work in precious metals. In fact, their jewelry shows the most advanced metallurgical techniques found in the ancient Mediterranean.

A pendant of the river god Achelous was made using the technique of granulation—fusing granules of precious metals to a gold background.

- One of the largest, most impressive, and most important pieces of Etruscan jewelry was discovered in a tomb at Cerveteri, a golden *fibula*—a pin used to fasten clothing—found in the burial of a high-status woman whose body was laid out in one chamber of the large Regolini-Galassi tomb.
  - The fibula demonstrates the spread of Eastern influence in art during the Orientalizing period, as well as the advanced techniques of Etruscan jewelers. One such technique was *granulation*, that is, the fusing of precious metal granules to a gold background to create patterns, filigree, and *repoussé*.

- The size of the fibula, just over a foot long, and its material make clear that it is a symbolic work, not a practical one for daily wear. It might have been created specifically for this burial to reflect the status of the female deceased in a manner parallel to the shields and chairs for men, each signifying high status in a gendered way.

Etruscan Skeumorphism

- *Skeuomorphism* refers to the manufacture of works in one material designed to evoke the appearance of works made in another. This is most commonly seen in Etruscan vessels, in which terra-cotta is substituted for more expensive metal, such as bronze, silver, or gold.

- How do we determine that a ceramic object was based on metal when no parallel pieces exist? The answer is from "metal" shapes and workmanship, such as fluting, engraving, divisions of shape, decoration, and so on. All these features aren't necessary for a pot but preserve the original in metal transferred to the terra-cotta object.

- A superb example of Etruscan skeuomorphism is a 6th-century-B.C. terra-cotta storage jar (*dolium*) with a stout, flaring rim. The body is ornamented with three registers of decoration and vertical, slightly diagonal flutes. The form of the decoration on the body and shoulder of the jar rely on models from metalware vessels.

Industries Supporting Religious Observance

- The Etruscan sanctuary at Cetamura del Chianti offers a fascinating look into a facet of industry that is not often considered: industries dedicated to supporting religious observance.

- The site is a hilltop rural sanctuary about 18 miles north of Siena. Here, excavators cleared a well that had been filled with material over a period of 400 years, beginning in the 3rd century B.C. Altogether, they found 14 bronze vessels and hundreds of objects, mostly in ceramic or metal, that demonstrate the ritual usage of the well and the industries working at the site.

- This find provides unique evidence that certain industries were located in the sanctuary itself, probably expanding to supply it and those who visited it with necessary materials for worship. Many of the hundreds of objects found in the well were produced on site by the ceramic and metalworking facilities. They were clearly ritual in nature, including hundreds of miniature terra-cotta vessels, which were substituted for the full-size ones in sacrifice.

- Many bronze and iron amulets, utensils, rings, and unrecognizable objects were found, as well. All of these were made on a lower terrace of the sanctuary, where excavators discovered a kiln and a forge. Either religious officials or visiting pilgrims would purchase these items to sacrifice in the sanctuary as the culminating event of a visit.

Suggested Reading

Beazley, *Etruscan Vase Painting*.

Nagy, "Etruscan Votive Terracottas and their Archaeological Contexts," in de Grummond and Edlund-Berry, eds., *The Archaeology of Sanctuaries and Ritual in Etruria*, pp. 113–125.

Rasmussen, *Bucchero Pottery from Southern Etruria*.

Questions to Consider

1. How do you think the desire for documenting personal achievement or accomplishment came to spur the rise in portrait images in the Etruscan world?
2. In what ways do terra-cotta pieces allow us to "see" what the now-missing vessels made of precious metals looked like in Etruscan culture?

Lecture
18

Etruscan Sports and Spectacles

It may be difficult to believe, but sports and spectacle mattered even more in the Etruscan world than they do for us today. For us, sports generally involves proclaiming support for a geographical entity—a team from a certain city—but in antiquity, individual athletes were celebrated, not teams. In addition, although some people claim to "live or die" with their teams, in some sports of ancient Italy, the outcomes truly were life or death. In fact, with the Etruscans, we see the origins of gladiators and theatrical forms of prisoner execution that became central to Roman life. In this lecture, we will survey some of the most important sports in the ancient world and examine their cultural meaning.

Ancient Contexts for Sports

- In the ancient world, sports and games were traditionally held as part of major religious festivals. For the Etruscans, that meant the annual festival of Etruscan religious identity at Fanum Voltumnae, when all Etruscans gathered to worship, conduct games, elect the annual religious and political officials for the federation, and trade in a massive market.
  - The origin of these games is lost in history. It seems to be contemporary with the founding of the Etruscan Federation around 700 B.C.
  - They continued to be held at least until the 4th century A.D., when a decree from the emperor Constantine I granted the Umbrians the same rights to hold an annual event as had been held at the Fanum Voltumnae.
- Early testimony about what exactly constituted the games included in religious festivals comes to us in a description of the games held by the first Etruscan king of Rome, Tarquinius Priscus. In about 600 B.C.,

he celebrated a victory over the Latin people surrounding Rome with horseraces and boxers imported especially from Etruria for the occasion.

- In addition, Herodotus tells us that after the Battle of Alalia (c. 535 B.C.), the people of Cerveteri, following a series of omens and the advice of the oracle at Delphi, observed religious rituals, including athletic and equestrian games.

- Both of these contexts—annual religious festivals and military victory celebrations—were part of Etruscan culture and would later become familiar in Roman games.

- However, the games for which we have the best evidence were held in honor of the dead: funeral games. The Tomb of the Augurs at Tarquinia (c. 530 B.C.) provides one of the earliest Etruscan tomb paintings illustrating funeral games. The large-scale fresco paintings on the interior of the single-chamber tomb take as their subjects the events of Etruscan funerary rituals.
  - On the back wall opposite the entrance are two mourners flanking a doorway. It seems likely that this is the door to the tomb itself and that the funerary rituals, including games, are taking place in front of it.

  - Each of the side walls is dominated with a large figural frieze. The central group on one wall is a pair of wrestlers, showing the reliance on Greek models for Etruscan art. These figures participate in a Greek athletic contest and are drawn in Greek style with Archaic proportions. Between the figures is a stack of cauldrons, the prize for this athletic contest.

  - The most important group in the tomb and one of the most significant in all of Etruscan art consists of two men and a dog. The dog, held on a leash by one man, is attacking the other man, who is armed with a club. The success of the dog's attacks is seen from the blood that pours from the wounds on the man's legs. Indeed, this blood must flow into the ground as an offering to the recently deceased. This is the earliest visual evidence of the origins of gladiatorial combat in the blood sacrifices of Etruscan funeral games.

Types of Ancient Sports

- Equestrian sports seem to have especially captivated the Etruscans. As we've said, elites used chariots as markers of aristocratic status. Sponsoring chariot races was another sort of outlet for that, particularly in the context of funeral games. We have remains of a number of chariots from tombs, as well as paintings of four- and two-horse chariot races.
  - The Etruscan charioteers differ in dress and equipment from the Greeks, for example, often tying the reins around their waists, a system later adopted by the Romans.

  - Another Etruscan peculiarity was the *triga*, a three-horse chariot team. This arrangement was never used by the Greeks but was popular in Etruria, especially at Chiusi, where half the Archaic period reliefs show the *triga*. The Etruscans brought the *triga* to Rome, where races were held in the Campus Martius along the banks of the Tiber.

  - In addition, horseraces were a common element of Italic religious festivals. The horserace plaques from the aristocratic dwelling at Murlo (c. 580 B.C.) show three bareback riders, galloping away from a feature that shares attributes of a turning post, as seen in chariot-racing imagery. The top of the feature is a cauldron, a large vessel of the type described in the *Aeneid* as a prize for a race during funeral games.

- Perhaps not as prestigious as the equestrian events but probably more numerous were the athletic contests. The majority of these consisted of what today we'd call track and field, that is, events held at the ancient Olympics. Many of these have a military origin or application, which is at least partly responsible for the male-only participation. They also share the characteristic of not being judged or scored. In these ancient contests, the winner was the athlete who went further or faster than all the other competitors.
  - Footraces were popular, including those in which the runners wore only loincloths and those in which they competed in full armor. Note that the lack of purely nude athletics sets the Etruscans apart from the Greeks.

- Long jumping was another contest familiar to us and the Greeks, along with throwing events, such as the shotput, javelin, and discus.

- Boxing was especially important for funeral games because it was a blood sport. Images on tombs make the shedding of blood in boxing matches quite prominent, again, probably because the blood was an offering to the recently deceased.

Spectators and Participants

- The Tomb of the Olympic Games in Tarquinia has an almost identical dog-versus-man fight scene as the one we saw earlier. This reinforces the idea that some contests, such as boxing, were at least in part conducted for bloodshed, if not for the inevitable death of the man armed with the club. Indeed, it seems as if arming the man was a nod to the entertainment aspect of the match. This was spectacle, as in spectacular entertainment, and the needs of the audience to see the struggle—not just blood and death—were filled by arming the victim.

- In the Greek world, athletics were personal contests undertaken by elite males to celebrate their individual greatness. In the Etruscan world, once again, we see a stark difference from the Greek in that sports and sacrifices were undertaken by other than elites. In some cases, particularly those involving blood sacrifices, the participants seem to have been slaves, probably purchased for just that reason. Other athletes may have been professionals, such as horseback riders who engaged in trick riding.

Transmission of Etruscan Games

- Because of the Roman conquest of the Etruscan heartland, additional evidence of funerary games comes from southern Italy, which also provides a superb case study in the transmission of the games to other Italic people and to the Romans.

- The Greek colony of Poseidonia was directly across the Sele River from Etruscan territory, and ideas and influences flowed back and forth between the two peoples. Like many of the communities along the west coast of Italy, Poseidonia was overrun in the late 5th century B.C. by incursions of Italic people from the center of Italy. In the case of

Poseidonia, the Lucanians occupied the city starting about 425 B.C., bringing their own culture to dominate and absorb those of the Greeks and Etruscans. From this point, the city is referred to as Paestum.

- In the immediate aftermath of the Lucanian occupation of Paestum, we might expect more Greek influence to remain, but it was the Etruscan that predominated. Looking at Lucanian tomb paintings, we can see some evidence of this. The Lucanian tombs differ from the Greek in shape, though all are underground tombs. Their paintings also differ in subject. The most revealing subjects in the Lucanian tomb paintings are funerary rituals, notably, Etruscan funeral games, including the earliest images of gladiatorial combat in art.

- Lucanian tomb paintings with human figures date to 390 B.C., with the earliest images of funerary ritual among the paintings dated to 380 B.C. This demonstrates the key role funerary ritual played in celebrating the lives of the deceased and the piety of the survivors in preparing appropriately elaborate tombs.
  - The wall paintings from Tomb 90a preserve funerary games in three pairs of figures on two walls. These depictions include a pair of charioteers driving two chariots past a column, a pair of boxers pummeling each other until blood flows, and a pair of armed and armored gladiators, also fighting until blood flows freely and watched by a figure who may be a supervising official.

  - The emphasis on blood flow is significant and sets these games apart from the athletic contests known from Greek funeral games. Here, the blood seems to be a sacrifice to the dead, over whose tomb the competitors might have fought so that the blood soaked the ground above the deceased.

  - These scenes likely do not illustrate the actual games for this individual but represent the idealized version, operating as a sort of promise to the deceased, witnessed by those attending the funeral and standing around the open tomb.

- The inclusion of blood sports may illustrate the conduit for these games to flow into Rome. Although chariot racing and athletic events were brought to Rome directly by the Etruscans in the 7th century B.C., it was only with the Roman conquest of southern Etruscan territory in the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. that they encountered funeral games. Shortly afterwards, gladiatorial bouts became a notable and, eventually, iconic element in Roman funeral rites, continuing from the 3rd century B.C. to the 4th century A.D.

Suggested Reading

Bevagna, "Etruscan Sport."

Bronson, "Chariot Racing in Etruria."

Kyle, "Etruscan Sport and Spectacle."

Questions to Consider

1. How did Etruscan sports differ from the Greek in participants and practice, and what effect did those differences have on their use in funeral games?
2. The Etruscan practice of blood sacrifice is well known. How did it shape the spectacular entertainments of the Etruscans and Romans?

Lecture 19

The Etruscan Banquet

Representations of the banquet in antiquity are generally recognizable by the pose of the diners, the presence of servants, the appearance of music or entertainment, and evidence that this is a social event, with more than one pair of diners on a single couch. The popularity of the banquet in Etruscan culture was probably the result of its adaptability as a form. It could be used to honor the dead, celebrate military victory, worship the gods, or reinforce elite social and political hierarchy. In this lecture, we'll first establish some antecedents of the banquet in Near Eastern and Greek culture as a baseline for comparison, then examine the forms and contexts for the extraordinary Etruscan banquets.

Evidence of Banqueting

- Evidence of banqueting is found in many cultures in the ancient Mediterranean. It seems likely that we can trace a connection between the practice in the Near East to that in Greece. An interesting Near Eastern banqueting image is a stone relief that lined the walls of the palace of Ashurnasirpal at Nimrud in about 880 B.C.
  - It shows the king reclining on a dining couch while his queen sits on a throne or an elaborate chair at his feet. A table stands between them, and containers of food and incense burners are seen on the ground between the attendants standing by. To the far left are a lyre player and a drummer. This all takes place in a garden with date palms, grape vines, trees, and one of the heads of the king's enemies stuck on a tree branch, leading to the conclusion that this is a victory banquet.

  - A remarkable text survives from the Assyrian Empire that describes the banquet Ashurnasirpal held at the palace to inaugurate it. It tallies the vast quantities of food and the huge number of guests—69,574. The banquet was a display of control of the empire and its resources.

- Greek banquets, which may have been influenced by those in the Near East, differed dramatically. In particular, the most characteristically Greek banquet is the *symposium*, an exclusively elite male drinking party, for which a great deal of evidence exists.

The Banquet Experience

- We are fortunate to have banquet services from many Etruscan tombs, including furniture, dishes, serving vessels, and cooking equipment. In some cases, these items seem to have been used for actual funerary banquets, but in most, they were placed in the tomb to ensure that the deceased had access to them in the afterlife. The services convey a certain status in and of themselves and show a commitment to the Etruscan social structure.

- Most scholars see the banquet as a means of reinforcing social hierarchy and distinguishing the Etruscan elites from non-elites, but that purpose may be less significant than their role in creating an opportunity for peer bonding among elites. Certainly, there was some internal hierarchy in terms of who reclined on which couch, but within the small group of a banquet, we see a classic exclusive shared experience.

- One of the most important images of Etruscan banqueting that survives is from the complex at Murlo. This banquet scene (c. 580 B.C.) is preserved on one of the stamped terra-cotta tiles that made up the frieze on the exterior of the building. A banqueting service was found in the remains of the structure, which means that this scene represents an idealized image of actual events that took place in the space.
  - Each tile shows two dining couches holding a pair of reclining diners, one male and one female. Between the couches is a large wine vessel on a stand, called a *thina.* Attendants stand at the head and foot of each couch.

  - This scene is filled with elements that have parallels in Greek and Near Eastern art from the period, including the Greek-style banqueting furniture and a variety of figures in a hierarchy of scale, with the high-status banqueters reclining in pairs on couches

depicted in larger scale than the lower-status attendants, musicians, and cup bearers.

- The event may mirror the types of banquets that took place in the complex but should not be considered as documenting Etruscan daily life. The drinking cups and bowls held by the banqueters, for example, are ceremonial vessels paralleled by those found on Greek and Near Eastern reliefs; thus, the entire event probably had religious significance.

- A notable Etruscan departure from the Greek and Near Eastern source material is the presence of many women in the scene, suggesting their importance in Etruscan ritual and social events. The motif represents the Etruscan absorption of high-status activities from Greek and Phoenician culture but their adjustment of those to reflect Etruscan cultural norms.

- Other archaeological evidence also attests to the notion of women as equals to men, at least in the banquet context. The Tomb of the Dogtooth Frieze at Cerveteri was the burial place of an aristocratic woman sometime between 625 to 600 B.C. Inscribed female names found on two *thina* in the tomb corroborate the fact that aristocratic Etruscan women actually owned their own wine vessels. Indeed, this woman may even have hosted banquets.

Banqueting Images in Tombs

- One of the most important sets of tomb paintings for our understanding of banqueting comes from a tomb at Orvieto. The meal shown is certainly idealized, but all the vessels and furnishings have parallels in actual objects from tombs. The left-hand walls of the tomb chamber were painted with scenes of banquet preparation, while the actual banquet itself was shown on the right.

- A large banquet scene also dominates the back wall of the burial chamber of the Tomb of the Leopards at Tarquinia (c. 470 B.C.). Its subject and composition rely closely on Greek models. Like the banquet panels in the

Tomb of the Diver, it has three couches, each holding two elite diners, while servants stand at their feet.

- Greek conventions of profile faces, blocks of color, gendered skin tone (white for women, brick red for men), and Archaic body proportions are used. The overall composition of the wall, however, relies on Etruscan conventions, with its tripartite division both horizontally and vertically and the use of red lines to define the registers and act as groundlines in the upper zones.

- Moreover, the subject is not a symposium but a banquet of male-female couples. Other Etruscan conventions applied to the scene include hierarchy of scale, with the small-scale servants reflecting their lower status.

- Another contemporary tomb from Tarquinia shows the dynamic nature of Etruscan art and culture in taking the subject of banqueting and making it their own. The dancers from the Tomb of the Triclinium at Tarquinia demonstrate the continuity of influence of Greek Archaic artistic style and subjects in Etruscan art.

- The elements of Greek-inspired art, elite identity, portraiture, and the mourning impulse in Etruscan art come together in a modified banquet scene from the Tomb of the Shields (325 B.C.), also from Tarquinia. The majority of the paintings here are scenes from the lives of the Velcha family, the tomb's occupants.
  - The many depictions of members of the Velcha family show them in a variety of poses and situations that reinforce the family's status, including at least one banquet scene. The two banqueters in this scene are identified by painted captions. Larth Velcha is reclining on his couch with his wife, Velia Seitithi, who is handing him an egg, a common symbol of rebirth or life after death in Etruscan tombs and tomb paintings.

  - Unlike the earlier celebratory banquets, this one is somber, with Velia looking mournfully at her husband, while he places his hand on her shoulder in a gesture of comfort. She is portrayed in three-quarter view, a 4th-century-B.C. Greek artistic refinement. The wall paintings

in the tomb combine the iconography of death and that of elite life in new ways and use the motif of the banquet to do so, demonstrating its fungible nature.

Understanding Banquet Scenes

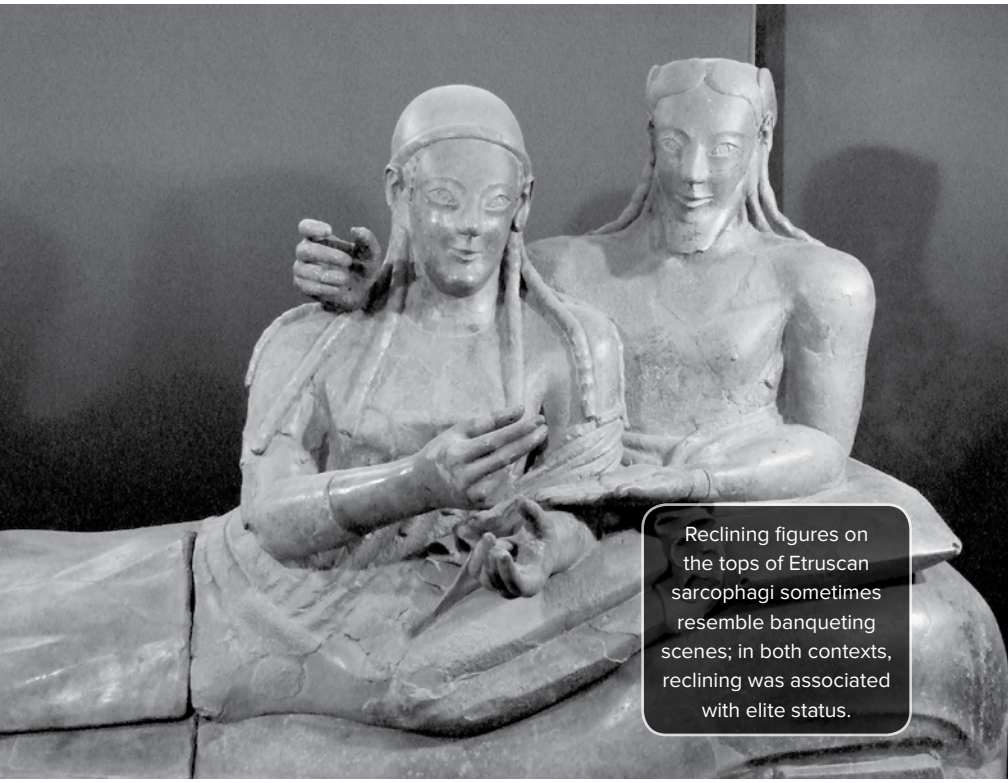
- Etruscan banquets were extraordinary in part for their ubiquity. We find archaeological and artistic evidence for them in virtually every context, from domestic to sacred to funerary. That speaks, of course, to their flexible applicability to a range of social events. They are also remarkable for their participants; men and women of both the elite and the more modest classes seem to have banqueted to mark significant events.

- The Etruscan banqueting scenes can be thought of both as actual events—important moments from the lives of Etruria's aristocracy or funeral banquets in honor of the deceased—and as a kind of wishful thinking about the sort of "heroic" existence awaiting them in the afterlife.

- One of the thorniest problems in understanding Etruscan and early Italian art is determining the meaning of the scenes on the wall paintings in Etruscan tombs, and the ubiquitous banquets are perhaps the most divisive images for scholars.
  - All scholars conclude that the banquets portray the deceased and are not just generic images. But some feel that these high-status social gatherings are idealized images of the type of events that would have punctuated Etruscan life. Others see them as merely symbolic of the status, or presumed status, of the deceased; therefore, they may not reflect any actual event but stand as a shorthand for Etruscan elite life.

  - A third school concludes that these are banquets of eternity and that the images are actually of gatherings in the underworld, at which the deceased, family, and friends partake in a feast, the imagery of which depicts the happy afterlife they will have—an eternity marked by feasting, music, dancing, and games.

- Naturally, banquets get conflated with the almost identical reclining figures on the tops of Etruscan sarcophagi and urns. Are these people at



Reclining figures on the tops of Etruscan sarcophagi sometimes resemble banqueting scenes; in both contexts, reclining was associated with elite status.

an idealized earthly banquet, banqueting in the afterlife, or reclining as at a banquet because that pose is visually consistent with elite status?

- Probably the latter is the most critical element that caused the spread of this motif across the Etruscan world. Reclining to dine indicates special event banqueting and a certain minimum status. And regardless of the occasion, whether a military victory, religious initiation, funeral ritual, or political event, the pose is identical. Taking that figure out of context still conveys elite status, no matter what the presumptive event is.

- The evidence seems to tell us that banquets were probably the most significant social expression of group membership and elite status in the Etruscan world. They represented opportunities to celebrate military victory, worship the gods, honor the dead, reconnect with family, and reinforce political position. So powerful is the imagery of banqueting that the representation of a person reclining to dine became the default for the deceased on the sarcophagus or cinerary urn.

Suggested Reading

Nijboar, "Banquet, Marzeah, Sumposion and Symposium during the Iron Age."

Small, "Eat, Drink and Be Merry," in De Puma and Small, eds., *Murlo and the Etruscans*, pp. 85–94.

Tuck, "The Etruscan Seated Banquet."

Questions to Consider

1. How can we tell if a banquet is meant to portray a real event, an idealized social relationship, or the circumstances of the deceased in the underworld? What are the markers that allow us to decide?
2. What are the differences in Greek, Near Eastern, and Etruscan banqueting imagery? What does each tell us about the social world of each culture?

Lecture 20

Etruscan Women

Luxurious, frivolous, depraved—these adjectives were all attributed to the Etruscans by Greek and Roman authors, mainly because of the perceived status of women in the Etruscan world. Women's social roles were the source of the most strident condemnation of Etruscan society. But were these authors' understandings of those roles accurate? And if so, what was it that angered—or, possibly, frightened—the foreign commentators? In this lecture, we'll examine the status and responsibilities of Etruscan women by looking at each role they filled and drawing comparisons to Near Eastern, Greek, and Roman women. The result will indicate the source of moral outrage displayed by the foreign authors and the unique position of women in the Etruscan world.

Priestesses

- As far as we know, every society has had female religious figures that we refer to collectively as priestesses. The range of their activities and religions is vast, but in general, it's intriguing to note that the patterns seen in Etruria are much closer to those in the Near East than to those in Greek city-states. To select just one example, Enheduanna, the daughter of Sargon the Great, founder of the Akkadian Empire, was the high priestess of Nanna and devoted to the worship of Inanna. She held her position as daughter of the king and was active and influential in both religious and political matters.

- In the Greek world, women held a large number of positions as priestesses but were removed from any political engagement or influence. The closest were the oracles of Apollo, such as the Pythia, oracle of Apollo at Delphi. Her pronouncements frequently shaped the Greek military and political world, but she herself was never actively involved. Some scholars think that her prophecies were actually delivered by the priests, who interpreted her ecstatic speech. The presumption in this scenario is that the priests could "interpret" whatever they wished from the oracle's utterances.

- That situation is far different from the best-known Etruscan priestesses and oracles, that is, those who were involved with the Etruscan dynasty at Rome. Of these, the most obvious in terms of public engagement was the priestess of Mater Matuta (the Etruscan goddess Uni). Her temple was built in Rome by the Etruscan king Servius Tullius and played a key role in the transition between kings.
  - After a man was nominated, the priestess would spend the night in the temple, communing with the goddess; in the morning, she would appear and announce the goddess's support for the next king. In this way, the priestess acted as an agent of political change, confirming the acceptance of the new king.

  - Other female religious figures were active agents of political change in ways that the Greeks would have found anathema. For example, the Etruscan prophetess Tanaquil, wife of Tarquinius Priscus, was the agent of succession for two kings.

- Similar to the stories of Tanaquil were those told about the Sibyl at Cumae, the female oracle of Apollo. First, it was said that she was the one who directed Aeneas on his journey to the underworld, which was a necessary precondition to his visit to the location where Rome would be founded. Second, she appeared on succeeding nights in disguise to the Etruscan king Tarquinius and offered him books of prophecy. The ones he ultimately accepted were the books of prophecy to which Rome turned in moments of crisis.

- Aside from mythical priestesses, images of actual priestesses are found as votives at shrines across the Etruscan world. The Etruscan word for priestess, *hatrencu*, is found, as well, most remarkably in the Tomb of the Inscriptions, a 4th-century-B.C. tomb found at Vulci. There, in six burial chambers were found at least five sarcophagi for women marked as *hatrencu*. Although these women came from three different families, their primary identity at burial was as priestesses, and they seem to have been buried collegially, that is, with other priestesses, rather than with their husbands and children or with their birth families.

- This pattern was unseen in Greek culture for women and used for men only when they had performed some great service to the state, such as the Athenians who fell at the Battle of Marathon.

- To treat these women as the Greeks would treat only men who served the state violated two major cultural constructs for the Greeks: that women are defined first by family and that matters of state are the province of men. This must have been one source of the Greek outrage at the role of Etruscan women.

Wives

- Theopompus, a Greek historian of the 4th century B.C., tells us that "Sharing wives is an established Etruscan custom." Yet despite this assertion, the Etruscans seem to have practiced monogamy. Theopompus, however, might be referring to the indecency of Etruscan women and their shameless appearance in public with men who were not their husbands. It does seem to be true that Etruscan women operated with far more autonomy in public and had far more freedom in private than their Greek or Roman contemporaries.

- Paintings from the 4th-century-B.C. Tomba Golini at Orvieto show a woman overseeing the work in the kitchen as food is prepared for a banquet. She is clearly of high status, wearing a gown and mantle and jewelry, and seems to be the hostess for the feast. This and the evidence from tombs of women owning their own banquet services provide more support for arguments of marital equality. In addition, women had their own names, rather than feminine versions of their father's names, and passed along both names and property.

- Theopompus says further, "The Etruscans raise all the children that are born, without knowing who their fathers are." Given that there is no independent evidence for indiscriminate sexual behavior outside of marriage by either sex, what might be the basis for this claim?
  - Etruscan childrearing seems to have contrasted with Greek and Roman practice. In those cultures, the father looked on a child at birth and decided, based on a number of factors, whether to raise

the child or to have it exposed. That moment of decision by the father was his implicit acceptance of paternity.

- The Etruscans had no such custom and, in that way, were closer to the Jews and the ancient Egyptians than to the Romans or Greeks.

- With regard to intercourse, Theopompus tells us: "It is no disgrace for them to do anything in the open, or to be seen having it done to them, for they consider it a native custom." Remarkably, we have evidence for the basis of this seemingly absurd statement, though the circumstances are more restricted than Theopompus lets on.
  - One of the wall paintings in the Tomb of the Bulls shows two couples out in a field having intercourse. The Tomb of the Floggings, also at Tarquinia, has another wall painting of two groups, each consisting of three people engaged in sexual activities. All of these clearly take place outdoors, bolstering Theopompus's statement.

  - These images, however, represent a specific form of religious ritual and one not unique to the Etruscans. In each case, the people are participating in rites of fertility using sympathetic magic.

Mothers

- Maternal mortality in childbirth is a real danger, even in modern times. To mitigate the dangers (or, at least, the fears) associated with childbirth, Etruscan women invoked a number of divine protectors.
  - We see evidence of this on Etruscan mirrors with scenes of divine births. The deity of childbirth, Thalna, almost invariably attends the births, ensuring their success.

  - These scenes were probably viewed as metaphors for mortal childbirth. The mirrors on which they were engraved may have been given to women on their wedding day or as they were expecting children. Along with the imagery, we find amulets and prayers.

- Assuming that mother and child both survived the initial dangers of childbirth, the woman's fears would not be over. Child mortality was also a serious problem, and despite what we sometimes read elsewhere, people

in the ancient world loved and cared for their children and mourned their deaths, just as we do.

- The fear of premature death manifested itself in a number of shrines across the Etruscan world, where prayers, sacrifices, and votives were made to protect children.

- The clearest sign of this insecurity toward the fate of children, especially newborns, is seen in the large number of terra-cotta votive sculptures found in these sanctuaries. Many have the same form of an enthroned goddess holding one or more swaddled infants in her arms.

- It's difficult to compare motherhood in Etruria with the same institutions in Greece and Rome, in part because images of mothers are rarely found in Greek or Roman art. That in itself says a great deal about the status and notions of privacy inherent in women and children's lives in those cultures. They were not on public view. As in so many other areas, that was not the case for the Etruscans.

A wall painting on the Tomb of the Bulls shows two couples in a field having intercourse, which prompted the ire of Theopompus; in truth, however, these acts represent a specific form of religious ritual—a fertility rite.

Women in Public Roles

- At Greek symposia, women were never included as guests but only as servants, entertainers, or paid companions. This may explain another quote from Theopompus: "They do not share their couches with their husbands but with the other men who happen to be present, and they propose toasts to anyone they choose. They are expert drinkers and very attractive. The children live the way their parents live, often attending drinking parties and having sexual relations with all the women."

- We can pinpoint three reasons for Theopompus's outrage here. First, women socialized with men other than their husbands. Second, by proposing toasts, in Theopompus's view, women usurped the role of men. Finally, the assertion that children often attended drinking parties shows cultural confusion. Theopompus wrongly equated Etruscan banquets—formal dining events—with Greek symposia—exclusively male drinking parties.

- In all the extant Etruscan tomb paintings, we find 201 representations of women. Of these, 167 could be considered depictions of women in public or social contexts. The paintings show women dancing (79), dining at banquets (58), serving at various functions (13), participating as spectators at public events (10), and fulfilling other roles. The proportions revealed in this count don't necessarily match reality, but they certainly represent a range of female public roles at all ranks in society that were unique to the Etruscans.

- Obviously, the status and roles of women in the Etruscan world differed in substantial ways from those of women in other ancient Mediterranean societies. They were seemingly equal partners in marriage; fulfilled public, civic functions; and were socially engaged, all qualities that set them apart from women in their neighboring communities. In taking on these roles, Etruscan women overturned many of the foundational concepts of Greek culture and drew the ire of Greek authors.

Suggested Reading

Bonfante, “Etruscan Couples and Their Aristocratic Society.”

Nielsen, “Portrait of a Marriage.”

———, “Common Tombs for Women in Etruria.”

Swaddling and Prag, *Seianti Hanunia Tlesnasa: The Story of an Etruscan Noblewoman*.

Questions to Consider

1. How did religious office act as a basis for Etruscan women to influence the course of government and society?
2. What sorts of archaeological evidence support or refute specific statements of Greek authors condemning Etruscan culture?

Lecture
21

Etruscan Families

The Etruscans are almost completely responsible for the Western notion of family. In fact, they originated the very idea of a family name in Europe. As we explore Etruscan naming practices and what they reveal about families, we will see the status and roles of men in the family and learn about family relations and structure. Many of these elements are seen in ties of mutual support and comfort.

Ancient Naming Practices

- Ancient Hebrew naming practice followed the pattern: X, son (or daughter) of Y. This is a personal name followed by what is called a *patronymic*, the father's name. Notice that this practice includes no family names. Knowing the identity of the father is sufficient, and there's no need to profess connection to a larger group. Also, the mother (or, more to the point, the mother's father) is invisible in this system. The relationship to the father is all-critical.

- The situation of ancient Greeks could be slightly more complicated. Athenians, for example, added a patronymic and a man's *deme* ("tribe") to the personal name. From the 4th century B.C. on, we also see the rise of more names patterned as X of Place (a *locative*), such as Anthemius of Tralles. This is a name pattern for city dwellers who privilege that portion of their identity above their patronym or tribe.

- The Etruscan naming system is distinguished from others by containing a family name of patrilinear descent added to the personal name. In Latin, this would come to be referred to as *nomen gentilicium* or just *nomen* ("name").
  - This difference is significant because it redefines one's most important name from the personal to the family. The family name is, literally, one's name, and the personal name becomes a prename, giving powerful evidence of the centrality of family in Etruscan culture.

- The patronymic is present, too, giving us the three-name formula eventually passed down to the Romans and, through them, to the Western world.

- The entire notion of family names in the Western tradition seems to derive from the Etruscans, who passed it to the Romans. For the first time a standard, unchanging name could be used to distinguish an entire subgroup of people within a culture or community.

- The Etruscan naming system was designed to represent a complex, sophisticated family structure, in which, for example, married women did not just leave their father's family and become part of their husband's.
  - For the ancient Hebrews, each marriage created a new family, which meant that there was no need for family names.

  - For the Etruscans, the concept of family was more inclusive and extensive. Their system reflected a society that, unlike that of the Hebrews or classical Athens, was not tribal. They lived in a world defined not by excluding outsiders or including only those from one city-state but by the connections between families in one particular community and among communities. Family was the prioritized identity for both men and women, even seeming to transcend city-state as an identifying principle.

Marital Equality: Evidence from Tombs and Homes

- In an earlier lecture, we saw that many family tombs were designed to create an interior burial space for pairs of beds, final resting places for husband and wife. If Etruscan tomb forms reflect house forms, then we can conclude that women (and children) were not restricted to exclusive areas in the home, nor were there exclusively male areas—both elements that were commonly found in Greek houses.

- The remains of actual Etruscan houses at a wide number of sites support the conclusion drawn from tomb evidence: Marital equality was the Etruscan norm. The structures of the houses of virtually all periods and places show consistent symmetry and no evidence of what is termed *monofunctionality* of rooms. That is, they seem to have nothing that

approximates the *andron* (a male room) in a Greek house or the secluded female suite.

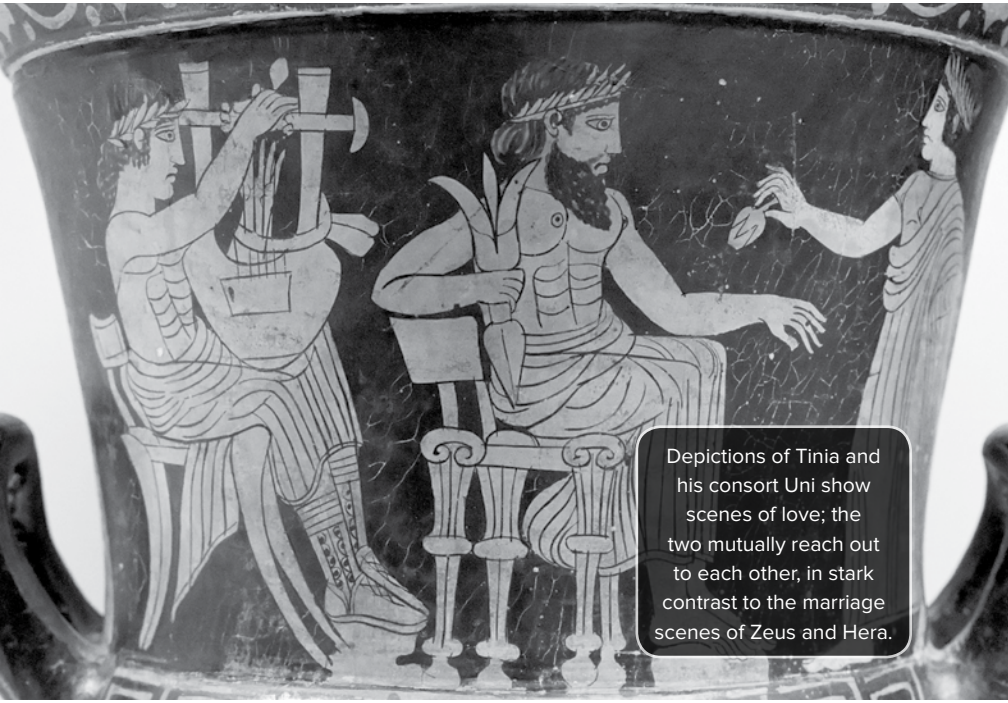
- In cultures where we see wide variances in life expectancy between men and women, we can reasonably conclude that their lives had some drastic differences. But two studies from Etruria show a narrow range of life expectancies for men and women (44 years for women and 49 years for men in southern Etruria and 48 years for women and 46 years for men in central Etruria). Such numbers argue for similar living conditions between Etruscan men and women.

Etruscan Views of Family in Myth

- As we've said, myths are important indicators of a culture's values and social structure.
  - For example, in Greek myth, many individual heroes roam the countryside, performing acts of mayhem under the shelter of the concept of autonomous violence. These heroes decide for themselves who or what needs to be attacked and under what conditions. Greek culture relished individual rather than collective achievement.

  - In contrast, the Etruscan hero myths we know most about involve the exploits of the brothers Avle and Caile Vipinas. Myths of heroic brothers are rare in Greek culture, where the emphasis is on the achievements of a single male. Once again, for the Etruscans, we see that family is a defining element of their identity.

- In Greek myths, family stories of the gods provide the most obvious evidence to establish male and female archetypes and model marital relationships. Zeus and Hera, for example, do not have a healthy, functional relationship. In contrast, the principal god of the Etruscans was Tinia, and his consort was Uni. Etruscan images of this divine couple show them in scenes of mutual love, and the depictions of Tinia reinforce his role as a patron god of fertility, reproduction, and the protection of children—aspects completely missing from the duties of Zeus.



Depictions of Tinia and his consort Uni show scenes of love; the two mutually reach out to each other, in stark contrast to the marriage scenes of Zeus and Hera.

- As previously mentioned, Tinia also has more of a peacekeeping element to his lightning throwing than Zeus or Jupiter. In fact, in deciding whether or not to intervene in a conflict, he confers with the other gods in his divine family. This concept, known in Latin as *consilium*, is an important check on male abuse of power.

- Perhaps the best indicator of the Etruscan preference for family, children, and romantic love—in sharp contrast to Greek myths of conflict and doomed love—can be found in alterations of Greek myth to meet Etruscan cultural requirements. We can see this specifically in the stories of Menrva, the Greek Athena, who is often a nurturing figure for the Etruscans. Similarly, Uni, unlike her counterpart, Hera, cares for children, even those of other women fathered by her husband. The Etruscan

notions of societal-wide care for the young and an inclusive definition of family led to these alterations.

Etruscan Childhood

- Images of children at all stages of life, from birth to adulthood, are found in Etruscan art. Indeed, everything we know says that Etruscan children were loved and cared for, and their place in the family put them under the protection of all its members.

- How children were raised, of course, varied enormously depending on the period and the class of the parents. We know that both boys and girls were educated at least to the extent of literacy. Boys worked outside the home, in the fields, in trade, in various arts and crafts, or in what we would today call civil engineering. Boys were also trained to undertake civic, military, and religious duties when they became men.

- Girls were trained in the usual domestic duties, which differed somewhat depending on class. All girls, however, were taught to spin wool into yarn and to dye and weave that into cloth. This was an incredibly time-consuming but essential household task, often performed with other women. Girls probably learned myths and songs during these long working sessions.

Summing Up the Etruscan Family

- In a number of ways, family structure and family life are constants around the world; thus, variations are indicative of unique cultural qualities. For the Etruscans, their culture developed in ways that distinguish them from their neighbors. Two images might serve as shorthand for the centrality of an apparently equal marriage in defining family.
  - The first is the 6th-century-B.C. spouse sarcophagus from Cerveteri. This life-size terra-cotta sculpture of a smiling, reclining couple on their dining and burial couch is the very image of marital happiness. Significantly, the figures are together and of the same size, and neither upstages the other, all aspects that contrast with Greek pieces from the same period.

- Another sarcophagus lid from Vulci (c. 300 B.C.) shows another couple, Larth Tetnies and Thanchvil Tarnai, reclining in their marital bed. They are nude, their bodies concealed by a blanket. They both have their arms around each other, looking directly into each other's eyes, unaware of any audience. The image is intimate, personal, and seemingly casual. It's also not unique; other examples from Vulci show the same scene.

- Notably, in each example, the faces are individualized, perhaps not exactly portraits but at least attempts at portraiture. The objective was to portray an actual couple in a real, if idealized, relationship. That relationship is centered on the marriage bed, symbol of the heart of the family and the imagery of equality.

- Contrast this depiction with the famous scene near the end of Homer's *Odyssey* when Odysseus returns home and proves his identity by describing the marriage bed he shared with Penelope. In that instance, it was his bed, which he had made personally by hand. Symbolically the heart of the household, the bed was created by Odysseus and shared with Penelope.

- For the Romans, a telling definition of family is found in the myth of Aeneas. When he fled Troy, he brought with him his father, his son, and his household gods, all the elements needed to transfer his family into the new land they were settling. Neither a wife nor even any female relatives were needed to define family. No such notion of male creation or definition of the family is found in the Etruscan world.

- In fact, family for the Etruscans had a definition, form, and manifestation seemingly unique in the ancient Mediterranean. The marriage relationship, the core in defining the family, showed remarkable equality. Women in marriage retained rights, kept their own names and property, wrote their own wills, and passed both name and property on to their children. Children were visible, and their care was socialized to the entire family—even to the entire community. In these ways, the Etruscan notion of family is far more familiar to us today and projects a sense of the modern that is missing from the Etruscans' contemporary neighbors.

Suggested Reading

Becker, “Childhood among the Etruscans.”

Nielsen, “Women and Family in a Changing Society.”

Questions to Consider

1. In what specific ways do Etruscans’ variations of Greek myth reveal their expectations and hopes for lifelong, loving family relationships?
2. Consider ways in which naming practices reflect family and social structure in various cultures. What examples can you think of that parallel or contrast with the elaborate Etruscan naming system?

Lecture
22

The Etruscan World Falls Apart

Generally, history survey courses move from culture to culture one period at a time, hitting the high points. This leads to the mistaken impression that those cultures existed only during particular time periods. In the case of the Etruscan world, maps of Italy show it under Roman control by the 3rd century B.C., but despite this political control, the Romans couldn't wipe out Etruscan culture. In this lecture, we'll examine the last centuries of the Etruscan world, Etruscan reaction to Roman rule, and the theme of pain and sorrow in Etruscan funerary art. We'll conclude with the final forced relocation of Etruscans to North Africa—the lands of their conquered allies the Carthaginians—in the 1st century B.C.

Roman Conquest and Occupation

- It's understandable that the relentless chorus of the Etruscans' military losses would lead to the conclusion that they were gone by the 3rd century B.C. The closest Etruscan city to Rome, Veii, was besieged and taken by the Romans in 396 B.C. This might seem the beginning of the end, but remember that the Etruscan cities were all independent city-states; thus, the loss of one sovereign state didn't inevitably spell the end for all of them.

- From 358 to 351, the Etruscans, led by Tarquinia, fought a brutal war against Rome. A truce lasted for 40 years, when the major Roman-Etruscan wars started in 311 B.C. These were fought by virtually all the Etruscan cities, although apparently not in coordinated attacks.

- Rome suffered a number of losses but eventually won decisive victories in 294, 293, and 280 B.C. over Tarquinia, Orvieto, and Vulci. Finally, in 273 B.C., Cerveteri and Vulci lost half their territory, and the Romans decided to occupy Etruria rather than to rely on rule through treaties or truces. The Roman colony of Cosa, founded in 273 B.C., marked the first Roman

military occupation of these coastal communities and a shift in the policy of containment to one of occupation.

- In the Etruscan communities themselves, the Romans selected allies who effectively exploited class struggles in the cities, allying themselves with aristocratic families against the lower classes. In the most dramatic case of occupation, the Romans occupied Orvieto, the city closest to the great federation sanctuary, and relocated its population to Bolsena and Chiusi.

The Ara della Regina temple, dating to the period of war and occupation, provides stunning examples of terra-cotta work—evidence of the cultural renaissance that took place in the aftermath of war with Rome.

Reactions to Roman Rule

- The period of the 3rd to the 1st centuries B.C., if viewed only politically by the truces and treaties made between Etruscan city-states and Rome, might seem the end of Etruscan culture, but it was not. In fact, there was something of a cultural renaissance among many of the Etruscan cities at the time. Greek artistic influences continued to permeate their arts, and the connections with Greek communities through trade and exchange seem just as strong as they were before the great wars.
  - Etruscan sanctuaries continued to thrive, except for Pyrgi and the Etruscan League sanctuary outside Orvieto. New terra-cotta architectural sculptures covered temple exteriors and filled sanctuaries, demonstrating bold, dramatic compositions and consistent or renewed piety on the parts of those who funded them.

  - Rebuilding sanctuaries destroyed in the recent wars might be one explanation for the explosion of Etruscan religious construction, but it was probably at least partially motivated by a need to reinforce Etruscan cultural identity. Sanctuaries were one of the most important places where public identity was created and shared.

- Sanctuary construction was not the only cultural reaction to the crises of the 3rd through 1st centuries B.C. We've already noted a shift in the tone of wall paintings in Etruscan tombs during the early part of this period. The familiar images of banqueting couples seem to shift from celebratory to mourning, and we see an increase in demonic imagery.

Evidence from Perugia

- In addition to variations in traditional imagery, we also find dramatically different subjects on traditional forms. For example, let's look at the subjects from myth found on the cinerary urns of Perugia. Originally one of the 12 major cities of the Etruscan League, Perugia took a leading role in the Etruscan wars of the 4th and early 3rd centuries B.C., until it was defeated and signed a truce with Rome in 295 B.C.

- In the period following that, the myth of Iphigenia became the one most commonly found on urns at Perugia. This story is one of the events during the build-up to the Trojan War. Agamemnon, commander of the Greek

forces, had apparently angered the goddess Artemis, who prevented the Greeks from launching their fleet toward Troy. The commander was told that Artemis would be placated only by the sacrifice of his eldest daughter, Iphigenia. Ultimately, Iphigenia allowed herself to be sacrificed for the Greek cause.

- If we widen our view to look at the other popular mythological subjects on urns from Perugia in this period, we seem to see a pattern. After the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the next most popular subject is the ambush of Troilus by Achilles, another event of the Trojan War.

- It's difficult to know what lesson we're supposed to draw from these scenes. Is it something related to death and slaughter on behalf of a more-or-less good cause? That seems rather gloomy, perhaps reflecting a pessimistic view of the world. It seems that to understand the full message of these depictions, we need to know more about the myths.
  - The sacrifice of Iphigenia allows the Greeks to sail to Troy, but Agamemnon's wife (Iphigenia's mother) harbors resentment for the sacrifice of her eldest daughter. On Agamemnon's homecoming, she and her lover kill him. Then Orestes, the surviving son, revenges his father by killing his mother and her lover. Everyone involved in the story is guilty of some act of impiety and it ends badly.

  - Similarly, the full story of Troilus ends badly for everyone. In the fullest version, Achilles kills Troilus at the temple of Apollo—an act of gross impiety. That act was the main reason Apollo guided the arrow of Paris that pierced Achilles's heel and killed him.

  - Assuming that the audience at the time knew these stories, then the images convey very different meanings. They are not only images of noble death, but the stories from which they stem promise the ultimate destruction of those who brought about the deaths. That promised revenge seems to be the ultimate lesson and explains the popularity of both of these stories in the period following Roman domination of Etruria: Etruscans die for their communities, but their killers will eventually suffer an even worse fate.

The Path to Roman Victory

- Etruscan desire for revenge wasn't limited to metaphorical application of Greek myth. In fact, the Etruscans seem to have never stopped resisting the Romans, even after their league sanctuary was destroyed and the local populace was transferred 30 miles away, just after 294 B.C. Their next great opportunity occurred during the Second Punic War (218–202 B.C.).

- When Hannibal invaded Italy and won a series of battles against the Romans, many of Rome's allies and communities under truce shifted alliance to the Carthaginians. One of the most important of these was Capua, which went over to Hannibal voluntarily in 216 B.C. After four years of intermittent attempts, the Romans retook Capua in 211 B.C. and, in revenge, executed its magistrates, local senators, and many citizens.

- Gradually, through the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C., the Etruscans became more integrated into Roman society, but the 1st century B.C. was a period of great change in Italy. After the Second and Third Punic Wars, large amounts of Italian territory became public land under the power of Roman aristocrats, who created vast estates farmed using slave labor. Poor rural farmers couldn't compete, and some were driven off their land into the cities.

- The unrest of the period led to the Social War (91–88 B.C.) between Rome and its former allies in Italy (the *socii*). War was declared when Rome refused the *socii*'s repeated requests for full Roman citizenship. The brutal war led to the destruction of a number of *socii* communities, the siege of others, and the eventual seizure of cities and land for Roman colonies, including such old Etruscan communities as Pompeii.

- For the Etruscans, as we saw during the aftermath of the Etruscan wars of the 3rd century B.C., a religious response was called for, and in this case, the response was dramatic. According to their religious doctrine, the gods had promised the Etruscan people 10 *saecula*, a period of time equivalent to the longest possible human lifespan. As a result of the Social War, Arruns Veltumnus of Chiusi announced a revelation that this unrest marked the end of the 8th *saeculum*. The Etruscans' days were truly numbered.

- Sulla's civil war against the Roman general Marius was fought in Etruria, and the follow-up attacks by Sulla in 83 and 82 B.C. devastated many Etruscan cities, leading to wholesale massacres of populations and land confiscation. The surviving dispossessed attempted to overthrow their occupiers in 77 and 62 B.C., but each uprising failed and brought about additional consequences. Perugia was the site for one of the last of these battles in 41 B.C., when Octavian, the future emperor Augustus, besieged and destroyed the city.

Relocation of the Etruscans

- Evidence of Roman attempts to solve the problems of integrating Etruscans and dealing with their propensity for revolt can be found in three boundary stones set by an Etruscan colonist in Tunisia. The stones demonstrate the continued use of the Etruscan language, culture, and religion.
  - These forms of boundary stones were known in Etruria, but their appearance in Tunisia was unusual. And the use of the Etruscan language indicates the expectation that those reading the stones would also read Etruscan.

  - The stones are thought to mean that an entire Etruscan community was founded on the edge of the Sahara during the turmoil of the 1st century B.C. The location is significant; it shows the relocation of these people from the rich farmland of central Italy, probably Chiusi, to territory literally on the edges of the Roman world and of questionable utility.

- The period of the Etruscan colony in Tunisia is also the period of the *Liber linteus*, the Etruscan ritual calendar found in Egypt. The book may represent another contemporary Etruscan colony. We know that linen from Chiusi was exported to Egypt to make books during the 1st century A.D. The links to Chiusi found in the material from both Tunisia and Egypt reinforce the conclusion that the Romans relocated Etruscans from that city in particular, perhaps singling it out for its leadership of the first attacks against Rome when the republic was founded in 509 B.C.

- But the efforts to repress the Etruscan people and culture failed. In fact, we see powerful evidence of the culture's tenacity until the fall of the Roman world.

Suggested Reading

Bradley, "Romanization."

Munzi, "Strategies and Forms of Political Romanization in Central-Southern Etruria."

Witcher, "Settlement and Society in Early Imperial Etruria."

Questions to Consider

1. How do the subjects found on Etruscan urns reflect the world in which they were made? What can they tell us about the Etruscan attitudes toward their Roman occupiers in the later centuries B.C.?
2. In what ways did religion become a critical way for the Etruscans from the 3rd century B.C. on to define and celebrate their cultural identity? Do we see it as a way for subject peoples to talk about and to their subjugators?

Lecture
23

Etruscan Legacy in the Roman World

Although it has been mentioned frequently in these lectures, the Roman inheritance from the Etruscans deserves an extended look. In this lecture, we undertake a thought experiment of what Roman culture would be like without those elements that came to Rome through Etruria, including the Greek ones transferred via the Etruscans. First, we'll take a virtual walk through Rome, noting Etruscan cultural components across the city. Then, we'll "think away" those Etruscan items, concepts, and material. As we'll see, a vision of a vastly different world appears. Finally, we'll briefly speculate on alternative forms that might have replaced Etruscan ones.

A Virtual Walk to Rome

- We enter the city of Rome along the Via Flaminia, the 3rd-century-B.C. road that runs from Rome through southern Etruria and across the length of Umbria to northern Italy. In doing so, we must acknowledge that the road itself is an Etruscan technology. In addition, the many bridges that carry the road over the Tiber River and its tributaries were also Etruscan. Essentially, without that tradition, we would be walking a dirt road toward Rome.

- Before we reach the city, the Mausoleum of Augustus on the right dominates the Campus Martius, the great flood plain of Rome, as the largest building or monument in this zone of development. In shape, it is based on the great tumulus tombs we saw at Cerveteri. It was topped by a bronze statue of Augustus in a chariot, highlighting two Etruscan inheritances: bronze sculpture and chariot technology.

- Just a little further south but much closer to the road is the Ara Pacis ("Altar of Peace") vowed by the Senate in 13 B.C. The altar enclosure is covered with figural reliefs, including a procession of Augustus's extended family, apparently on their way to the altar's dedication.

- All the men wear togas, and the priests carry emblems of their offices, such as the *lituus*. Their bodyguards carry the *fasces*, the axe and rods symbol of state authority. Without Etruscan influence, none of these symbols would exist.

- Further, the concept of historical narrative relief was itself Etruscan, as was portraiture. This particular relief is assertively Etruscan: It shows women and children taking their places in public roles with adult men, something unseen in Greek or earlier Roman art.

The Campus Martius and Roman Soldiers

- Because the Campus Martius was the flood plain of the Tiber and largely a vast open set of fields, it became the default site close to the city for military training.

- The standard legionary soldier here was armored with a helmet, breastplate, and greaves and carried a shield. He was armed with a sword and a pair of light javelins to throw before drawing his sword and engaging in hand-to-hand combat. The body armor was fairly universal, but the metallurgy—particularly the processes that created strong bronze and iron pieces—was purely Etruscan. At the time of Augustus, this legionary's armor would be of inferior-grade metal. His *scutum*, his large rectangular shield, was also Etruscan, as were his javelins.

- The advantage this soldier had over his Etruscan counterparts was unit organization. The Etruscans fought essentially as individuals in battle, while the Romans had structured units, allowing men to support one another. Battle signals, however, were given by trumpets, large bronze instruments that the Romans adopted directly from the Etruscans.

- Outside the city, in ship sheds along the Tiber, Roman warships were held in dry dock. Without the Etruscans, each of these ships would be missing its large bronze rostrum—the heavy ram that projected from the prow, allowing the ship to ram and sink enemy vessels.

The Augustan City

- City walls were not an Etruscan invention, although arched gateways certainly were, as were the aqueducts that carried fresh water into Rome from springs up in the hills. As we pass through the walls into Rome along the Via Lata ("Broad Way"), we see a number of public and domestic structures.

- The Roman elite kept the front doors to their homes open during daylight hours. If we peek inside, we see a large front room called an *atrium*, rectangular in shape, with the front door in the center of one of the short walls of the rectangle; the organization of space is clearly based on principles of axiality and bilateral symmetry. The opposite wall is pierced by three openings, leading to three smaller spaces. This entire structure is the core Etruscan architectural unit.

- At the base of the Capitoline Hill, we are faced with two very different urban forms, both of which owe their shape to Etruscan influence. The hill itself was crowned by temples and is still surrounded by the remains of its original fortification walls, an early Etruscan form of urban planning.

- To the right, dominating the southern stretches of the Campus Martius, was the quarter of the city laid out by Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, Augustus's right-hand man and an Etruscan. Augustus would never have ruled the Roman world without Agrippa, but more directly, this notable quarter of the city would never have existed.
  - In a city that looked, according to Livy, as if it was the product of occupation, not settlement, the Agrippan constructions in the southern Campus Martius stand out for their orthogonal planning and orientation to the cardinal points. Agrippa's massive building program bears some remarkable similarity to the Etruscan city of Musarna from the 4th century B.C., with its orthogonal plan, division into 12 residential *insulae*, a central piazza, public monuments, and sewers.

  - It's also worth noting that Agrippa's first work on the infrastructure of Rome was to rebuild the storm sewers and organize the city into 14 districts, an attempt to impose order on centuries of chaos.

The Capitoline Hill and Forum Romanum

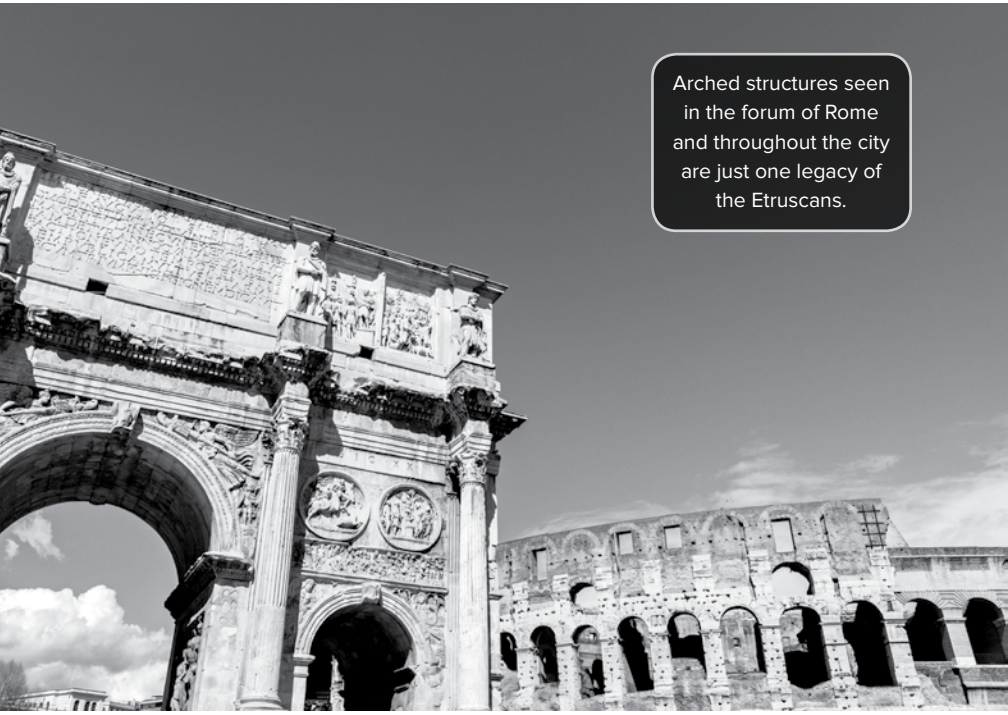
- On top of the Capitoline Hill were some of the most sacred spaces in ancient Rome—spaces that wouldn't exist without Etruscan influence.
  - Of course, the hill hosted the most important temple in ancient Rome, that of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. This temple held a cult statue with a painted red face, clothed in a *toga picta*. It was here that every victorious Roman general concluded his triumphal procession. Both the decoration of the statue and the procession and other activities carried out here were Etruscan traditions.

  - The temple itself was completely Etruscan in design, materials, and decoration. Everything from its foundations, to its high podium, deep front porch, tripartite *cella*, and wide roof were all Etruscan elements. This temple was one of a large number of sacred spaces that crowded the top of the hill, all of which were Etruscan in form.

- The basilicas and Senate house in the Forum Romanum were native Roman building forms, but the official magistrate's chair used by the men who governed Rome was an unaltered inheritance from the Etruscans. That chair was probably the clearest symbol of an elected official and was unchanged for perhaps 1,000 years from Etruscan examples preserved in tombs.

- Without the Etruscans, all five of the temples in the Roman Forum would be gone, along with the Regia, stripping the space of all sacred and some civic identity. That loss of religious identity would also extend to rituals, including the horserace held every October, after which the winning horse was sacrificed to Mars in his aspect as a fertility deity. That ritual subsumes three Etruscan elements: horseracing, blood sacrifice, and gods with complex fertility identities.

- The fate of other uses of the forum would also have been altered without Etruscan influence. Schools would probably have met in the basilicas and under the porticoes, but without the Etruscan adoption of alphabetic writing, schoolboys would not have copied their lessons on tablets. Education in other subjects might also have been eliminated, specifically science education, usually attributed to the Greeks. The Etruscans also



Arched structures seen in the forum of Rome and throughout the city are just one legacy of the Etruscans.

influenced mathematics, producing examples of the so-called Platonic solids before Plato and Pythagoras.

Other Sites in Rome

- The major buildings and spaces on the Palatine Hill included the temples of Apollo, Victory, and Magna Mater and the traditionally preserved house of Romulus, all constructed on the spur of the hill to the southwest and all of Etruscan form.

- The hill provides a great view to both the south and west. To the south, across the narrow valley of the Circus Maximus, is the Aventine Hill. It was surmounted by the Temple of Juno, built when the cult statue of the goddess was brought from the Etruscan city of Veii after it was sacked by Rome in 396 B.C.

- The Circus Maximus was the premier space in Rome for spectacle entertainment, including religious festivals that incorporated both chariot races and athletic events. Both of these components of the Roman *ludi* ("games") were found in much earlier Etruscan examples, and there is general agreement that their practice was transmitted from the Etruscans to the Romans.

- The first stone theater in Rome was the Theater of Pompey, dedicated in 52 B.C. in the southern Campus Martius. Despite the name, it was actually a temple-theater complex of a type known earlier in southern Etruscan examples. The connection of the theater to religious ritual was firmly established by the Etruscans and remained in place for the Romans, as well. The forms of entertainment that took place in the building, from acting to dance and pantomime, were all Etruscan.

- The subject of performers brings us to those entertainers that almost everyone believes were a Roman invention: gladiators. As we know by now, gladiators weren't a Roman innovation but originated in the blood sacrifice component of Etruscan funeral ritual. Under Augustus, they broke from that origin and became closer to the secular spectacle entertainment that they were under the high empire.

Rome without Etruscan Influence

- In our elimination of all things Etruscan from Rome, we leave the city with three broad categories of cultural remains: (1) those it held in common with other ancient Mediterranean cultures, such as altars, post-and-lintel construction, walled cities, and houses; (2) undeniably Roman inventions, such as concrete construction, bath complexes, imperial government, and so on; and (3) parts of Roman culture derived from Greek culture, mainly seen in the veneer of art and architecture that Augustus and his predecessors layered over the more traditional forms of the city of Rome.

- Still, as we've seen, Etruscan material didn't just color Roman culture but truly operated as its foundation. When we consider those things that generally define a culture in opposition to its neighbors, we usually select the most conservative elements, such as religious ritual, domestic

organization, family structure, burial practices, and government. In short, how people live, worship, rule themselves, organize their families, and leave their dead all serve to define a society. In the case of the Romans, virtually every facet of each of these categories came to them from their Etruscan neighbors.

Suggested Reading

Hall, ed., *Etruscan Italy*.

Questions to Consider

1. In what areas of the physical environment of Rome do we see the greatest reliance on Etruscan antecedents? What conclusions can we draw about Etruscan influence based on these patterns?
2. Considering the Etruscan influence on Roman concepts and beliefs, do these represent evidence of a greater or lesser Etruscan Rome than the physical structures? Are there historical parallels that enlighten our understanding of this relationship?

Lecture
24

Where Have the Etruscans Gone?

In the words of the author D. H. Lawrence: "The Italian people of today is on the whole not Italic—in that Roman sense—but much more near to the Etruscan." Can we trace this Etruscan strain today? The evidence suggests that they are still very much with us, not only culturally but—quite remarkably—genetically, as well. Science is poised to provide answers to questions on the future of Etruscans and to the oldest question of all: their origins.

Etruscan Design in the Renaissance

- During the Dark Ages and the medieval period, we don't find much evidence for Etruscan cultural continuity. But in the 14th century, native Italian culture began to reassert itself—and with that came a renewed interest in Roman culture. Of course, we call this period the Renaissance. Unbeknownst to most of those championing Roman culture at the time, they were actually celebrating many aspects of Etruscan culture.

- Some authors, mostly later writers reflecting back on the Renaissance, recognized the Etruscan material for what it was. Among those authors was John Ruskin, the influential 19th-century British art historian. Writing about all the key figures of the Italian early Renaissance, such as Giotto, Ghiberti, Donatello, Fra Angelico, and Botticelli, Ruskin concluded that they all made works that were "absolutely pure Etruscan, merely changing subjects."

- The influence of bronze sculpture, one of the Etruscan specialties, can be traced to the initial discovery in 1553 of the famous chimera sculpture. Discovered during excavations just outside the walls of the town of Arezzo, it was claimed immediately by Cosimo de' Medici and put on display in his residence. Although no one at the time could read the inscription that proved the chimera to be a votive dedication to the deity Tin, stylistically, it was instantly known to be Etruscan. Its display and

the celebration of it in print led to a renaissance in bronze casting in 15th-century Tuscany.

- The chimera wasn't alone in inspiring the Renaissance bronze industry. Other Etruscan bronzes came out of the ground almost constantly. For example, a 16th-century excavation outside of Florence yielded more than 500 bronze statuettes in just a few days. The popularity of Hercules among the Etruscans meant that many of these were votive dedications to him, resulting in an explosion of Hercules bronze statuettes in Tuscan art. Hundreds if not thousands of examples of these Etruscan-inspired works can still be found in museums and galleries even today.

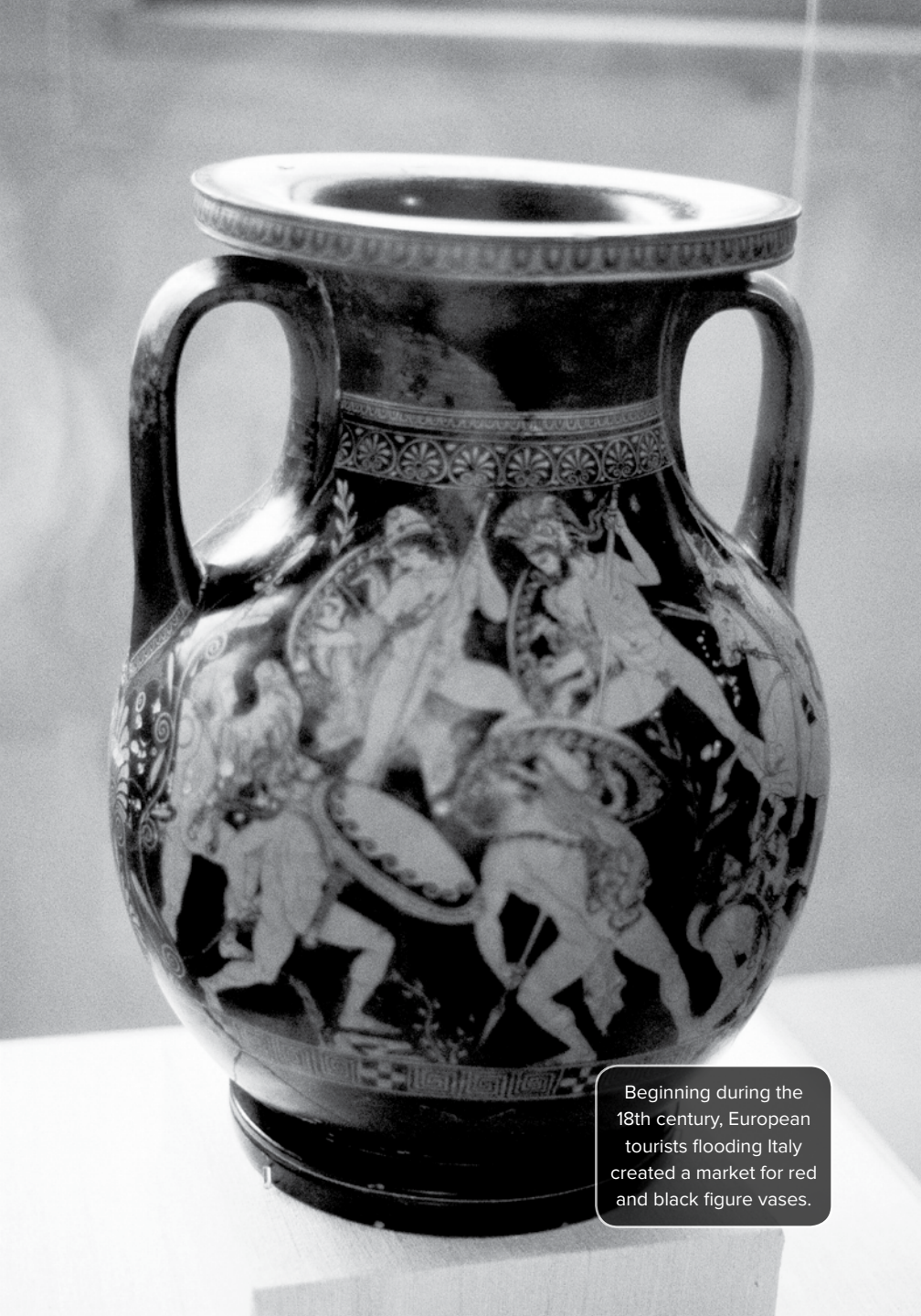
- These small-scale bronze works were the most numerous of the Etruscan-inspired products, but some patrons wanted larger-scale works, and artists were more than happy to oblige. Donatello's bronze *David*, with its slender proportions, contrapposto stance, and heroic nudity shares all three of these elements with Etruscan bronzes.

- Also popular were images of ordinary Etruscans seen in tomb painting or sculpture. One of the best-documented and most common artistic motifs the Renaissance artists took from Etruscan examples was the reclining diner. And this figure was fungible, that is, capable of being placed in a Christian work where, for example, a female could become the Virgin Mary or a male could be repurposed as Noah.

Etruscan Design in the 18th-Century

- Almost every art or archaeology museum of any size in Europe or North America has at least one example of the red and black figure vase, most of which are painted with figures from Greek myth. Thousands of these survive from antiquity, and more are found every year. We now know that they were thrown and decorated in Athens and exported across the ancient world, eventually leading to workshops that copied them in many other regions. The best and most intact examples were first discovered in large numbers in Etruscan tombs.

- When the vases were first found, the common belief was that they represented Etruscan art, rather than Etruscan taste and import patterns.



Beginning during the 18th century, European tourists flooding Italy created a market for red and black figure vases.

And they were published as Etruscan through much of the 18th century, until it was finally proven and accepted that they were Greek. By that time, however, a craze for the vases had swept western Europe, particularly England.

- The vases were the beginning of a significant trend in Etruscan design and interiors. People not only wanted to collect the vases but to live surrounded by what was then frequently referred to as Etrurian design. Three 18th-century Scottish architects and interior designers, the Adam brothers, became famous for their interiors that integrated their own version of classical design into every element of a room. The brothers' work was popular with wealthy aristocrats and industrial barons, as well as those of lower economic status.

- One of the most thorough expressions of Etruscan design and a truly remarkable example of how it permeated 18th-century culture was the founding of a city called Etruria in Staffordshire, England, in 1769. The city was the brainchild of Josiah Wedgwood, the famous pottery manufacturer, as the location for his new factory, appropriately called Etruria Works.

- The Adam style was also popular in the British colonies, especially in North America. There, it manifested as what we now call Federal style, the design popular during the American Revolution and its aftermath. The Etruscan style also inspired architects and interior designers in Germany. One example is the Etruscan room of the kings of Prussia, designed and created in their winter palace at Potsdam.

Explaining Cultural Continuity

- Returning to Italy, it's possible today to trace a remarkable amount of cultural continuity from the Etruscans. To cite but one example, the terra-cotta tiles on roofs across Tuscany are interchangeable with those found on the 6th-century-B.C. Etruscan buildings at Murlo. Add to these masonry techniques, stone paving of streets and piazzas, and the shape and proportions of doors and windows, and the extent of continuity in the material world of the modern inhabitants of Tuscany with their ancient counterparts is inarguable.

- Interestingly, this continuity is not found even in other regions of Italy. How, then, do we account for it in Tuscany? One explanation might be conscious emulation. The pride of regional identity leads to the conscious replication of forms and behaviors associated with the admired Etruscan population. That might be the case here, but the banality of some of the cultural markers, such as roof tiles and paving stones, seems to argue against a cultural renaissance celebrating great Etruscan qualities.

- This question has been raised for about as long as people have been aware of the Etruscans. Finally, only in this century, are we in a position to answer it and to definitively state the reason for this cultural continuity, as well as the larger questions of where the Etruscans went after Roman occupation and where they came from. The answers seem to be: nowhere. That is, the Etruscans didn't go anywhere, and they didn't come from anywhere. They seem to have started in the area that we call Tuscany and, most remarkably, are still there. We have modern genetics to thank for these conclusions.

- In 1997, a special issue of the journal *Etruscan Studies* published eight papers on these questions. Specifically, two were cultural or anthropological attempts to answer the questions by defining Etruscan culture or populations; both were inconclusive. The other six papers were scientific studies that used DNA analysis to try to answer questions on the ethnic makeup of the Etruscans and their origins and relationships to other peoples in Tuscany, Italy, and Europe.
  - In these papers, human geneticists used mitochondrial DNA to look for genetic variations that would indicate related populations. Determining the Etruscans' degree of variation from other populations might show their origins or, at least, common markers shared by select populations in Europe or the Mediterranean.

  - The results were disappointing. As one paper stated in its conclusions: "The answer to the questions—whether the sequences of the control region … can help in distinguishing the Etruscan identity, the Etruscan arrival or the Etruscan development, not necessarily their arrival in Tuscany—is in my opinion, disappointingly, no." Another paper concluded: "A direct proof of the continuity

between the original Etruscan people and some selected groups of individuals living today in Tuscany is not feasible."

- These negative conclusions about the human population of Tuscany were contrasted with other studies that attempted to answer the same questions using different evidence, in this case, the DNA of cattle. A 2006 study reported this finding: "Almost 60% of the mitochondrial DNA in modern cows in the central Tuscan region of the country—where the Etruscan civilization is thought to have arisen—was the same as that in cows from Anatolia and the Middle East."
  - The conclusion was reported in the press, especially the Turkish press, as evidence in favor of Herodotus's account of Etruscan immigration from Lydia.

  - It's important to note, however, that modern cow DNA says absolutely nothing about ancient Italy. In the study, no ancient material was used from either location, yet the researchers attempted to apply the findings to answer questions about the ancient world.

- A more recent, thorough, and larger study came to different conclusions: "The Etruscans can be considered ancestral, with a high degree of confidence, to the current inhabitants of Casentino and Volterra."
  - This represents a definite, scientifically based conclusion of continuity between ancient and modern populations in two Etruscan communities; it also answers the question of where the Etruscans went after Roman occupation: nowhere. They were and still are where they've always been, at least since the 8th century B.C.

  - That goes a long way toward explaining the cultural continuities found in Tuscany. It also suggests a model for Romanization, at least as far as this region is concerned, that may indicate the Roman civilization of ancient Etruria as a veneer laid over the ancient traditional culture, which may have not been too affected by it on the most basic level.

- In addressing the question of Etruscan origins, the researchers stated: "By further considering two Anatolian samples (35 and 123 individuals) we

could estimate that the genetic links between Tuscany and Anatolia date back to at least 5,000 years ago, strongly suggesting that the Etruscan culture developed locally, and not as an immediate consequence of immigration from the Eastern Mediterranean shores."

- There are, of course, countless examples of cultural descent linking us back to the Etruscans. Knowing that those exist should encourage us to examine the patterns and symbols of our world and see that they represent an accumulation of cultural identities and values added and taken away over the centuries and millennia. We are connected with people who lived for centuries more than two millennia ago, which makes us cultural caretakers, consciously passing on what we've been given to our descendants.

Suggested Reading

Bule, "Etruscan Echoes in Italian Renaissance Art," in Hall, ed., *Etruscan Italy*.

de Grummond, "Rediscovery," in Bonfante, ed., *Etruscan Life and Afterlife*.

Etruscan Studies, "The Potential Contributions of DNA Studies Regarding the Origins of the Etruscans."

Ghirotto, Tassi, Fumagalli, Colonna, Sandionigi, et al., "Origins and Evolution of the Etruscans."

Questions to Consider

1. In what ways have the Etruscans influenced our culture? In what ways have ideas and concepts been attributed to them to give those added authority?
2. Can we look to science to "solve" historical questions, such as the origin and fate of the Etruscans, or should we view it as only another form of evidence? What should be the relationship between science and history?

Timeline

B.C.

800 . . . . . Origins of Etruscan civilization in northern Italy.

775 . . . . . Founding of Cumae, first Greek colony in southern Italy.

770 . . . . . Founding of Etruscan colony of Capua to check Greek expansion to the north and east.

c. 600 . . . . . Founding of Etruscan colony at Pompeii while Greeks found colony at Herculaneum.

535 . . . . . Battle of Alalia, naval battle off Corsica in which the Greek fleet was largely destroyed by a combined Etruscan and Phoenician (Carthaginian) force. The Etruscans occupied Corsica as a result.

524 . . . . . Etruscan invasion of Greek areas of southern Italy stopped.

509 . . . . . Roman Republic founded. Etruscans from Tarquinia, Chiusi, and Veii attempt to force the last king back on the throne. Vulca of Veii creates terra-cotta sculpture for the Temple of Jupiter, Rome.

504 . . . . . Battle of Aricia; Arruns, son of Lars Porsena of Chiusi, defeated by a joint force of Latins and Greeks from Cumae.

c. 500 . . . . . Pyrgi plaques inscribed recording treaty between Phoenicians and Etruscans at Cerveteri.

475 . . . . . Etruscans lose a battle at Ticino River against the Celts, checking Etruscan expansion north.

474 . . . . . Battle of Cumae, naval battle with Greeks, led by Hiero of Syracuse and Aristodemus of Cumae. The Etruscans' defeat led to loss of their lands in southern Italy

435 . . . . . Lars Tolumnius, king of Veii, killed in single combat by the Roman general Aulus Cornelius Cossus.

415 . . . . . Etruscans ally with Athens in the Sicilian expedition against Syracuse. Etruscans suffer defeat, along with the Athenians.

396 . . . . . City of Veii sacked and looted by Rome after a long siege. Etruscans lose the Battle of Melpum against Celts, who settle the Po River valley.

384 . . . . . Sanctuary at Pyrgi attacked and looted by Dionysius of Syracuse.

359–351. . . War with Tarquinii, Falerii, and Caere.

338 . . . . . Ostia founded as a Roman colony to defend the mouth of the Tiber River from Etruscan attack. Capua submits to Roman rule.

290 . . . . . Romans defeat combined Celtic, Etruscan, and Samnite army to end the Samnite/Etruscan wars.

273 . . . . . Roman colony of Cosa founded, beginning Roman occupation of Etruscan territory.

264 . . . . . Volsinii is sacked by the Romans, the populace is dispersed, and the statue of Vortumnus is taken to Rome.

218–202. . . Second Punic War.

216 . . . . . Capua declares support for Hannibal.

211 . . . . . Capua retaken by Rome; leading citizens executed.

90 . . . . . Etruscans given full Roman citizenship through the Lex Julia.

89 . . . . . Roman Dictator Sulla razes Chiusi to the ground and, with it, the tomb of its ruler Lars Porsena. Arruns Veltumnus receives revelation of the end of the eighth age in Etruscan history.

41. . . . . Perugia besieged and sacked by forces of the future emperor Augustus; 300 Perugians sacrificed on the altar of Julius Caesar.

6 . . . . . Augustus divides Italy into regions, including region VII—Etruria, the first political unification of Etruscan territory.

A.D.

47 . . . . . Roman emperor Claudius revives the priestly college of 60 haruspices.

410 . . . . . Etruscan haruspices offer to drive away attacking Goths from Rome with lightning.

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Becker, Marshall J. "Childhood among the Etruscans." In *Construction of Childhood in Ancient Greece and Italy*, edited by Ada Cohen and Jeremy B. Rutter. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. This article explores the idea and definition of childhood for the Etruscans through examining burial practices. Becker finds that children younger than 5 ½ years old were buried under the eaves of the house while older children were buried in cemeteries also occupied by adults.

Beekes, R. S. P. *The Origins of the Etruscans.* Mededlingen van de Afdeling Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, Deel 66 no. 1. Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandes Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2003. Beekes asks: What if

Herodotus was right, and the Etruscans actually did come from Lydia? He argues that they did, which accounts for various facts: the references to Tyrsenians in Asia Minor, the social changes in Etruria around the beginning of the late Bronze Age, and existence of the Lemnos inscriptions. Beekes's theory is that the Etruscans originally lived in northwestern Asia Minor, along with the Lydians. Around 1200 B.C., as part of the general upheaval at this time, the Lydians went south, to the area where they are found in classical times, and the Etruscans crossed the sea to Italy.

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Bonfante, Giuliano, and Larissa Bonfante. *The Etruscan Language: An Introduction*. Rev. ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002. The first concise introduction to the study of the Etruscan language in English. The grammar lessons are supported with an excellent collection of Etruscan inscriptions and texts. Includes an archaeological and historical survey setting the language and inscriptions in their historical, geographical, and cultural contexts. Also features a helpful glossary and chapters on mythological figures mentioned in the inscriptions.

Bonfante, Larissa. *Etruscan Dress.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003. This thorough study of the development of Etruscan dress is based on extant pieces, artistic representations, and literary references. Bonfante explores the relationships of Near Eastern, Greek, and Roman styles to Etruscan styles, charting the influences of each culture. Furthermore, while tracing the foreign influences on each style of dress, she provides a chronology of Etruscan relations with the Near East and the Greek cities.

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Marini, Elena. "A Study of the Architectonic Development of the Great Funerary Tumuli in the Etruscan Necropolises of Cerveteri." *Etruscan Studies* 13 (2010): 3–28. Takes a developmental approach to the study of the elite tombs around the Etruscan city of Caere (Cerveteri) and connects the urban expansion of Cerveteri with the architectural development of the tombs. Categorizes the tumuli within the necropoleis and touches on the commercial relations of these families and the city within the wider Etruscan world.

McCartney, E. S. "The Military Indebtedness of Early Rome to Etruria." *MAAR* I (1917): 121–167. This classics article argues that in armor and weapons, as well

as military organization and tactics, Rome was completely subject in its early centuries to the example of the Etruscans. The author uses this material to conclude that Rome was an Etruscan city.

Munzi, M. “Strategies and Forms of Political Romanization in Central-Southern Etruria, Third Century BC.” In *Italy and the West: Comparative Issues in Romanization*, edited by S. Keay and N. Terrenato, pp. 39–53. Oxford: Oxbow, 2001. Munzi looks at the ways in which the Etruscan cities and their political elites negotiated alliances with Rome, with an emphasis on the agency of the locals in this new system and a de-emphasis on the military actions.

Naso, A. “Etruscan Style of Dying: Funerary Architecture, Tomb Groups, and Social Range at Caere and Its Hinterland during the Seventh–Sixth Centuries B.C.” In *Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, edited by N. Lanieri, pp. 141–162. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2007. Naso documents the shift in society of this period from the old aristocratic families to new forms of government through an examination of grave goods and tomb architecture of the necropoleis around Caere (Cerveteri).

Nielsen, M. “Portrait of a Marriage: The Old Etruscan Couple from Volterra.” *Acta Hyperborea* 4 (1992): 89–141. Using a couple sarcophagus from Volterra as a starting point, Nielsen explores the social construct of marriage in ancient Etruria.

———. “Common Tombs for Women in Etruria: Buried Matriarchies?” In *Female Networks and the Public Sphere in Roman Society*, edited by P. Setala and L. Savunen, pp. 65–139. Rome: Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae, 1999. In this very important article, Nielsen analyzes the meaning of women’s tombs in Etruria when the norm was for burials of couples or extended families. She concludes that they represent evidence for networks of female power in the Etruscan world, something that sets them apart from their other ancient counterparts.

———. “Women and Family in a Changing Society: A Quantitative Approach to Late Etruscan Burials.” *Analecta Romana* 17–18 (1989): 53–98.The social effects of the Roman conquest and occupation of Etruria are examined in this article on burials during the late Etruscan period. What was originally

designed as a study of women instead looks at changes among families in this tumultuous period.

Nijboar, A. J. “Banquet, Marzeah, Sumposion and Symposium during the Iron Age.” In *Regionalism and Globalism in Antiquity: Exploring Their Limits*, *Colloquia Antiqua 7*, edited by F. de Angelis, pp. 95–125. Leuven: Peeters, 2013. Nijboar provides a cross-cultural comparative analysis of upper-class male meetings with music and consumption of meat and wine. His discussion includes evidence for warrior ideology, ancestor cults, and funerary banquets in Etruria during the 7th and 6th centuries B.C.

Phillips, Kyle M. *In the Hills of Tuscany: Recent Excavations at the Etruscan Site of Poggio Civitate, Murlo, Siena*. Philadelphia: The University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, 1993. An overview of the site of Murlo by the director of 20 years of excavations. It includes his discovery of the large Archaic complex that preserves a critical stage in Etruscan domestic and religious architecture, as well as unique terra-cotta decoration.

Pieraccini, Lisa. “Families, Feasting, and Funerals: Funerary Ritual at Ancient Caere.” *Etruscan Studies* 7 (2000): 35–50. A comparative analysis of the banqueting materials found at and in tombs at Cerveteri and banquet scenes in Etruscan art. Concludes that families dined at the tomb with the deceased present as a means of honoring the dead and securing the wealth and status of the family in the eyes of the community.

Rasmussen, T. *Bucchero Pottery from Southern Etruria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979. This study catalogues the bucchero products of South Etruria from the 7th to the 4th centuries B.C. Many of the tomb groups catalogued are published here for the first time. A full survey of the decorative techniques is included, and the pattern of distribution both within Etruria and further afield is discussed.

Richardson, E. “The Muscle Cuirass in Etruria and Southern Italy.” *American Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 100.1 (1996): 91–120. This article collects 40 images and examples of the characteristic defensive armor of the 6th through 4th centuries B.C. It offers a typology and analyzes relationships to Greek examples.

Riva, Corinna. *The Urbanisation of Etruria: Funerary Practices and Social Change, 700–600 BC*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. In this survey of the burial and settlement evidence of 7th-century-B.C. Etruria, Riva traces the transformations of elite funerary practices and the structuring of political power around these practices in Etruria. She argues that the tomb became the locus for the articulation of new forms of political authority at urban centers.

Robinson, Elizabeth C., ed. *Papers on Italian Urbanism in the First Millennium B.C.* Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 97. Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2014. This volume includes 12 chapters by different authors exploring aspects of the subject. Two chapters are explicitly on northern Etruscan urban development and five on very early Rome and Latium. But all cover ancient Italy from the 9th to the 5th centuries B.C. and the development of cities.

Scullard, H. H. *The Etruscan Cities and Rome*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. A historical survey of the Etruscans based on placing them in their historical and geographical context in ancient Italy. Their relationship with Rome, as named in the title, is a focus, but their engagement with the other people of ancient Italy is also covered, especially regarding their expansions to the north and into Campania.

Smith, Christopher John. *Early Rome and Latium: Economy and Society, c. 1000 to 500 BC*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. This is the first full account in English of the archaeological material from early Rome and the surrounding region of Latium, from the Late Bronze Age down to the end of the 6th century B.C. The book is the first to set the region of Latium in its proper context as the hinterland of Rome and as participating in the major developments in central Italy, including Campania and Etruria.

Spivey, Nigel. *Etruscan Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1997. Provides a thoughtful and well-illustrated survey of Etruscan art, including its reliance on and connections to the art of Greece and the eastern Mediterranean and its relationship to Rome. This book moves beyond a simple study of art styles and techniques to illuminate the social, political, and cultural context of the art objects and artifacts.

Steingräber, Stephan. *Abundance of Life: Etruscan Wall Painting*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006. This book traces the stylistic and iconographic evolution of Etruscan wall paintings over the span of 500 years and analyzes what they reveal about Etruscan daily life, religion, funerary rites, and belief in the afterlife. The earliest paintings, with their colorful scenes of banquets, hunts, and athletic games, gave way, in the later tombs, to scenes whose darker subjects seem to reflect the collapse of the Etruscan world.

———. "The Process of Urbanization of Etruscan Settlements from the Late Villanovan to the Late Archaic Period." *Etruscan Studies* 8 (2001): 7–34. Provides a systematic survey of the origin, urban plan, and features that made up the earliest Etruscan cities, including many of their most characteristic features, such as temples and open plazas.

Stoddart, S. K. F. "The Political Landscape of Etruria." *The Journal of the Accordia Research Centre* 1 (1990): 39–51. Draws on politics, trade, colonial expansion, and inter-city contacts and conflicts to trace the shifting political authorities of the Etruscan world.

Swaddling, Judith. *Etruscan Mirrors: Archaic and Classical*. Corpus Speculorum Etruscorum Great Britain 1, British Museum 1. Volume 1. London: British Museum Press, 2001. This catalogue publishes the archaic and classical examples from the important collection of Etruscan decorated mirrors in the British Museum. The decoration includes scenes from everyday life (primarily religious and mythological subjects) and inscriptions. A detailed description of each example is accompanied by a photograph and facing-page drawing.

Swaddling, Judith, and J. Prag. *Seianti Hanunia Tlesnasa: The Story of an Etruscan Noblewoman*. London: The British Museum, 2002. This small book of 12 short chapters is based on the sarcophagus of the Etruscan noblewoman Seianti, found in 1886 near Chiusi and subsequently sold to the British Museum. The Seianti sarcophagus, with its identifying inscription, high-quality effigy of the deceased, surviving grave goods, and well-preserved skeleton, is studied in this work by archaeologists, art historians, and scientists. The result is a fascinating look at one body of evidence from a variety of approaches.

Thomas, Michael, and Gretchen E. Meyers, eds. *Monumentality in Etruscan and Early Roman Architecture: Ideology and Innovation.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012. This collection contains seven chapters that trace the concept of monumental architecture in domestic, tomb, and religious buildings across central ancient Italy. Much of the attention is concentrated on the critical period of the 6th century B.C.

Torelli, Mario, ed. *The Etruscans*. New York: Rizzoli, 2001. This is a wide-ranging series of chapters by experts in their various fields on a host of Etruscan topics. It includes excellent chapters on sculpture and bronzes, along with chapter surveys on the most important Etruscan museums at the Villa Giulia in Rome, the Vatican Collection, and the National Archaeological Museum in Florence.

Tuck, A. "The Etruscan Seated Banquet: Villanovan Ritual and Etruscan Iconography." *American Journal of Archaeology* 98.4 (1994): 617–628. Tuck examines seated rather than reclining banquet scenes to argue that the Etruscans in the Orientalizing period adapted foreign models of enthroned figures to portray their preexisting notion of a funeral banquet.

Turfa, Jean MacIntosh. *Divining the Etruscan World: The Brontoscopic Calendar and Religious Practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Turfa provides the text, translation, and contextual material for this Etruscan religious calendar. It served as a reference for augurs, telling them the general meaning of thunder any day of the year. The analysis of what the calendar tells us about belief and life at that time is fascinating.

———, ed. *The Etruscan World.* London; New York: Routledge, 2013. A massive work of 63 chapters covering in some way virtually every aspect of the Etruscans. Major sites each get a chapter, alongside the many chapters on Etruscan arts and sciences, history, geography, and religion.

van der Meer, L. Bouke. *Etrusco Ritu: Case Studies in Etruscan Ritual Behaviour.* Monographs on Antiquity, 5. Leuven: Peeters, 2011. A thematically organized work providing detailed descriptions and some analysis on Etruscan religious ritual as distinct from belief or mythology. The major divisions of family, funerary, and public rituals are subdivided into specific ritual occasions and time periods. It also traces the post-Etruscan survival of many rituals.

———, ed. *Material Aspects of Etruscan Religion: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Leiden, May 29 and 30, 2008*. Leuven: Peeters, 2010. The articles in this publication are based on presentations given at a colloquium with the same title as the book. They consider religious aspects of sanctuaries, cities, settlements, necropoleis, and tombs in Etruria, the Po valley, and Campania. Extremely important are the results of recent excavations in Tarquinia; at Gravisca, a multicultural harbor sanctuary near Tarquinia; Marzabotto; and several other sites. The introduction sketches the main lines of the development of Etruscan religion, with references to the contents of the colloquium papers.

———. *Liber Linteus Zagrabiensis. The Linen Book of Zagreb: A Comment on the Longest Etruscan Text*. Leuven: Peeters, 2007. Much more than a "comment," this is a book-length publication and commentary on one of the most important extant Etruscan texts by the leading scholar of Etruscan religion.

———. *The Bronze Liver of Piacenza: Analysis of a Polytheistic Structure*. Amsterdam: Brill, 1987. This monograph translates and provides commentary on the inscriptions on the practice liver used to train Etruscan seers. It also provides contextualizing commentary on the religious practices associated with it and the debate about how much they rely on antecedents from the ancient Near East.

———. *Myths and More on Etruscan Stone Sarcophagi, ca. 350–200 B.C*. Leuven: Peters, 2004. This book focuses on the chronology and meaning of representations, in painting or (painted) relief, on 148 coffins. It appears that the sarcophagi were made over a period of around six generations, between approximately 350 and 200 B.C., at a crucial time in the history of Etruria. Attention is paid to the find-spots, the family tombs, the owners of the sarcophagi, and the meanings of the images in light of Roman conquest.

———. *Interpretatio Etrusca: Greek Myths on Etruscan Mirrors*. Amsterdam: Brill, 1995. van der Meer brings together 300 inscribed scenes of myth on more than 3,000 Etruscan mirrors to examine the place of Greek myth in Etruscan domestic culture.

Wallace, Rex E. *Zikh Rasna: A Manual of the Etruscan Language and Inscriptions.* Ann Arbor, MI: Beech Stave Press 2008. This small volume is the

best introduction to Etruscan language available in English. It is a masterful summary of current knowledge on grammar and vocabulary. The author draws on all the most significant Etruscan texts and inscriptions. Little space is given to analysis; instead, the author concentrates on an explanation of the language in the manner of a true handbook.

Whitehead, Jane K., ed. (Various authors.) "The Potential Contributions of DNA Studies Regarding the Origins of the Etruscans." *Etruscan Studies* 4 (1997): 41–144. This special issue of *Etruscan Studies* includes eight articles on the genetic study of Etruscan populations. Some focus on the origin question, while others examine the relationships between ancient Etruscans and their neighbors, regional variation within Tuscany, and survival of their genetic material into the modern world.

Winter, Nancy. *Symbols of Wealth and Power: Architectural Terracotta Decoration in Etruria and Central Italy, 640–510 B.C.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2009. Rarely has a book been more aptly titled. In addition to their role in architecture, terra-cotta decorations were used to project wealth, power, and cultural identity at sanctuaries across central Italy in this period, as Dr. Winter's thorough, well-written work concludes.

Witcher, R. W. "Settlement and Society in Early Imperial Etruria." *Journal of Roman Studies* 91 (2006): 88–123. Witcher provides a synthesis of a number of archaeological surveys of this region to conclude that the interior of Etruria suffered a decline in the Roman period, while the coastal zone and the area around Rome were comparatively thriving under Roman rule. The economic or political causes for the depression of the Etruscan heartland are considered, as well.

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